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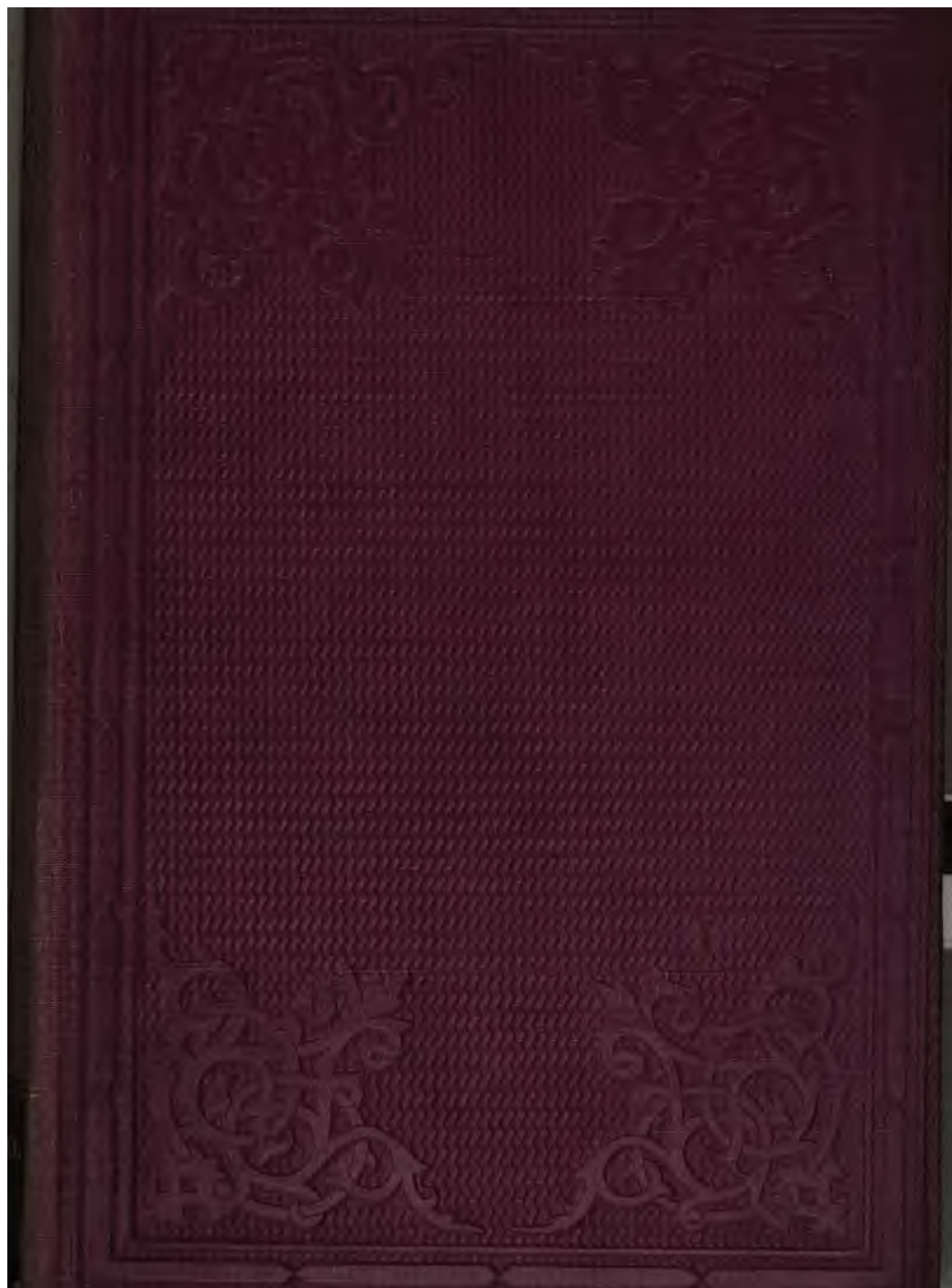
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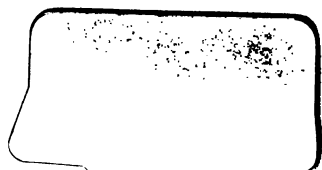
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**THE DOUBLE PROPHECY;**

**OR,**

**TRIALS OF THE HEART.**



THE  
DOUBLE PROPHECY;  
OR,  
TRIALS OF THE HEART.

BY WILLIAM CARLETON

AUTHOR OF "TRAITS AND STORIES OF THE IRISH PEASANTRY"—  
"WILLY REILLY"—"VALENTINE M'CLUTCHY"—  
"THE EVIL EYE"—ETC., ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:  
JAMES DUFFY, 22, PATERNOSTER-RROW;  
DUBLIN: 7, WELLINGTON-QUAY.  
1862.

250. 0. 129.

[REPRINTED FROM  
DUFFY'S "HIBERNIAN MAGAZINE."]



TO  
HIS EXCELLENCY  
GEORGE WILLIAM FREDERICK,  
EARL OF CARLISLE, K.G., ETC., ETC.,  
LORD LIEUTENANT OF IRELAND.

---

MY LORD,

There are many reasons why I should dedicate this work to your Excellency. In the first place, you were my early friend, and took an interest in me when few others did. I cannot forget the kind and encouraging letter which you wrote to me from London; at the time, when pressed by severe difficulties, I was about to seek for a pension. You were then Lord Morpeth, and not in office. Neither can I forget the value of that letter to the gentlemen who formed themselves, on its suggestion, into a committee to procure it. It not only guided their movements, but was the means of bringing them together, and occasioned them to act more vigorously on my behalf, especially when they saw that such a man seemed so anxious to promote my welfare.

Noblemen, my lord, are, after all, setting their titles aside, only common men; but, had your Lord-

ship been either a common nobleman or a common man, I never would have solicited your interest in my behalf, and neither would I have obtained it.

I feel that it is a hazardous thing for any author to dedicate a work to your Lordship; and for this reason, because he has to meet the scrutiny of a polished and fastidious taste, in conjunction with a judgment naturally severe, and matured upon the highest models of literary composition, both ancient and modern. I am justified, however, in dedicating this work to your Excellency, as I have said, for many reasons. Your Government of this country has been productive of the best possible effects. You have leaned neither to the one side nor the other, but maintained a just and dignified impartiality, which has made you, as it will make your memory, dear to the Irish people. You have disarmed political parties of their resentments, and they can now look each other in the face, and wonder why they were enemies. But this is not all. Where is there a literary or scientific Institution in the country, or any other Association designed for our public good, which you do not encourage and sanction by your presence and your eloquence. It cannot be said that I am flattering your Excellency. My lord, I am not capable of flattering either your Excellency or any other man, but I am capable of truth; and if I did not feel that what I say is truth, I dare not look into the faces of my countrymen after having given expression to falsehood,—upon a subject, too,

which every one of them understands as well as I do myself.

There is, however, one thing in this Dedication which makes me feel rather unfortunate with respect to it. I am deprived, in the sentiments I have expressed regarding your Excellency, of all claims to originality. In those sentiments I only follow in the train of public opinion, and merely repeat what it utters.

Another reason why I dedicate this work to you is, because it is my last and farewell contribution to Irish literature, as a Novelist, and I know no man under whose distinguished name I would rather close my labours.

You are yourself an exquisite poet, and some of the most beautiful productions I ever read were from your Lordship's pen. Indeed, I think that if you had been born in an humble position of life, and forced to depend on your own genius for your fame, you would have left a name behind you as great as that which you inherit from your illustrious ancestors. That they were not only illustrious, but great and good, is evident from the celebrated lines of Pope, written in the time of Queen Anne;—Pope, a man who would rather have satirized your family, or any family, if he could have justly done so than praised them—

“What can ennoble slaves, and sots, and cowards?  
Alas, not all the blood of all the Howards.”



That coming from so distinguished an individual, whose genius lay principally in satire, was the highest praise that could be bestowed on any family or any name.

There is only one circumstance which occasions me regret in this Dedication:—I fear that these volumes, which I give to the world under the permitted sanction of your Excellency's name, are not worthy of that name, but I trust that, at all events, your Lordship will peruse them in a lenient and forbearing spirit.

I close my literary labours in consequence of my declining state of health, and my increasing want of sight, or, what I fear I must term, my rapidly approaching blindness. All I require now, after a long and toilsome life, is repose during the brief period of it that is before me.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Excellency's faithful and obedient servant,

WILLIAM CARLETON.

A PARAGRAPH FOR THE GUIDANCE  
OF MY READERS.

THESE volumes have been written at least five years ago, and lay for two years of that time in manuscript, but not completed. They now appear, for the first time, in a collected shape. The scenes of this narrative are laid in my native North, and the language of some of the characters is also Northern, especially that of old Sam Wallace, the Presbyterian. That, however, to which I have to direct the attention of the reader is an error I fell into in the Postliminious Preface at the close of the book. In that Preface I represent the Heroine as being still a living woman, whereas the fact is, although I was ignorant of it at the time, that she has been dead close upon eleven years. There is nothing further that requires any particular observation of mine.

WILLIAM CARLETON.

July 29th, 1862.



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THE  
DOUBLE PROPHECY;  
OR,  
TRIALS OF THE HEART.

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CHAPTER I.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THOMAS BRINDSLEY AND HIS FAMILY—  
FUTURITY IMPENETRABLE UNLESS TO THE INITIATED.

“Truth is strange—stranger than fiction.”—BYRON.

IN a certain part of the North of Ireland, which for obvious reasons must be nameless, there lived, about thirty years ago, a man, descended from a decent and respectable, but reduced family, on whom it is our pleasure to bestow the name of Brindsley. This individual, whose Christian name was Thomas, had been in very humble circumstances, both before and about the period when we introduce him for a brief space to our readers. His manners, inherited from those habits of integrity and self-respect

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which were so remarkable in his family, were far above those of any other persons in his position of life. Every one who knew him respected him highly ; and although, from a consciousness of what his ancestors had been, he was somewhat proud and distant in his intercourse with the people at large, yet those who were aware of the just grounds upon which he persisted in maintaining a moral position so much above them, never felt nor expressed offence at conduct which in any other would have been termed an unbecoming assumption of superiority, or an offensive exhibition of pride. This man, whose disposition was so reserved and distant, possessed, nevertheless, the materials of a firm and determined character, in which lurked the seeds of a strong but latent ambition. His education—simply an English one—had not been neglected ; and as his natural intellect was of a higher standard than ordinary, he experienced an anxiety to try his fortune upon the broad stage of life. He could write a good hand, was an expert accountant, and possessed great facility and correctness in committing his sentiments on any subject to paper. His wife, though of

humble but decent origin, was a woman of great personal beauty ; and nothing could surpass their attachment to each other. He had won her from the rival love of a cousin of his own, a young man in much better circumstances than himself ; but who, though handsome and dashing in his manner, was a vindictive profligate, without the slightest element of moral principle to guide him in his intercourse with the world. Thomas Brindsley was unhappy in the early death of his first two children. They died each within a year after their birth, a circumstance which threw an additional tinge of gloom over his character. At length there came a severe season—in fact a year of famine ; and as he found himself struggling almost in vain with the pressure and difficulties of the times, he resolved to enter the army ; and by the advice of a sergeant, who was recruiting for the India service, he resolved to become a soldier in the army of the East. This, it is true, may seem rather cruel and heartless, as involving the abandonment of his wife ; but of this want of feeling the man was altogether guiltless. The recruiting officer had deceived him by stating



that he would be at liberty to bring his wife with him, an assertion which involved nothing more than a mere contingency—the first being that only a limited number of married women were allowed to accompany each regiment, and those determined by ballot. He and his wife still hoped that their lot might be an auspicious one, and that the wheel of Fortune might still turn in their favour. In this, however, they were disappointed. When the balloting day arrived, it is impossible to describe, or even to conceive, their agitation, or the dreadful alternatives of their hopes and fears. The ceremony passed, however, and, alas ! the chance was against them. We will not describe their separation, but must leave it to the imagination of our readers. We cannot, however, neglect to record her parting words.

“Thomas,” said she, “I may never again see you in this life, but, with God’s aid and grace, you shall see me before the throne of judgment, your true and faithful wife. I will not despair, my husband, but, on the contrary, will place my humble but firm trust in the care of an all-righteous and merciful Providence.”

“And if this is to be our last separation on earth,” he replied, “I hope you will meet my spirit hereafter, as full of truth and affection as your own.”

“You have a tress of my hair,” said she, “next your heart ; you will never remove it from that spot ?”

“Never,” said he, “until I see you again ; and if I do not, it will go to the grave with me.”

Whether it was their last separation or not, our readers shall ascertain in due time.

When the unhappy Mrs. Brindsley returned to her now desolate hearth, she was within three months of becoming a mother, for the third time. She was, however, a person of as much pride and self-respect as her husband, although her manners were more genial and cordial. She was also of a strong and independent mind, and came to the immediate and creditable resolution of leaving nothing undone to maintain herself, without the assistance of her friends, who, indeed, were at best but poorly capable of rendering her any support whatsoever. Her energy and activity soon became a common topic of

conversation among her neighbours, who pointed to her as an example of what incessant exertion can accomplish. She was an expert needle-woman, and possessed of great natural skill and taste in making up dresses. By the exercise of this talent she gradually wrought her way into employment as a country mantua-maker, and found her hands amply filled with the resources of beneficial industry.

At length, in due time, she gave birth to a daughter ; and in order to enable herself still to pursue her business, she engaged a growing girl, about fourteen, to attend to her baby, and discharge other domestic duties in her cottage. In this manner she went on struggling, not unsuccessfully, in working out the noblest object of human life—an honourable, though in her case, an humble independence.

We cannot dwell with a minuteness, which we feel would be only tedious to our readers, upon the level and monotonous course of her humble but exemplary life. Still we must not pass over this portion of it without recording her high-minded and faithful attachment to her absent husband. We have stated that he won

her from a profligate cousin of that husband's. This was true, and the task was anything but one of difficulty, where such a pure and virtuous heart as hers was in question. She rejected his cousin's proposals without hesitation, although in a temporal point of view, the choice she made was far inferior, and, indeed, anything but a prudent one. Her husband's cousin was still unmarried ; but although, owing to his own extravagance, much reduced in his circumstances, yet still as profligate as ever. In fact, now that her husband was absent, he assailed her with solicitations of the most dishonourable nature, and that with such pertinacity that she was obliged to appeal to the protection of her friends and acquaintances, to whom, as a matter necessary to her own safety, she stated the persecution to which she was perpetually subjected at his hands. Their indignation was so deep, and their determination to avenge the insults he was offering her, so loudly and unequivocally expressed, that the cowardly caitiff fled the country, and never showed his face in it again.

Her firm and resolute conduct under those circumstances, raised her to the highest pitch of

admiration amongst every person who heard of it, both high and low. Business increased so much upon her hands, that in a short time she found herself obliged to take in assistance to enable her to fulfil her engagements.

In this way she not only maintained herself, but was able, by degrees, to put something aside for future contingencies. It was about six months after the departure of her husband for the East, that his ruffian cousin finally disappeared from the country ; but six months more elapsed, and still the intelligence came not on which her heart was set. No communication whatsoever reached her for two years ; and after many a patient watch and expectation, she almost ceased to entertain any hope upon the subject, She knew her husband's affection for her, and felt absolutely certain, as she was justified in doing, that nothing but death ever could, or would have occasioned his silence.


At length, about the commencement, or rather towards the middle, of the third year, a letter reached his uncle, who was then on his death-bed, and father to the profligate cousin, who, it appears, had joined the same service, containing

an account of his death. It stated that he died of cholera, after an attack of only a few hours ; whilst the writer, at the same time, expressed great contrition for his own conduct, and hoped, as he was now a reformed man, that his cousin Thomas's widow would forgive him for his (poor Thomas's) sake. This dreadful intelligence prostrated her for a time, but though affectionate and faithful, she was, as we have already said, both firm and resolute. Perhaps, after all, the calamity inflicted by the knowledge of his death, was more easily borne than the suspense and uncertainty which would have preyed upon her by the ignorance of his fate. When the worst is known we are able to collect our energies and meet the blow ; but to hang in all the agonies of suspense, without being able to avail ourselves of hope and expectation on the one hand, or to combat the apprehended affliction in its worst shape on the other, is, of all conditions of human life and suffering, the most wasting, and the most difficult to sustain. The only source of consolation now, was her child, upon whom her heart turned with a double force of tenderness and affection. She thought that

admiration amongst every person who heard of it, both high and low. Business increased so much upon her hands, that in a short time she found herself obliged to take in assistance to enable her to fulfil her engagements.

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## THE DOUBLE PROPHECY.

an account of his death. It stated that he died of cancer after an attack of only a few hours. Whilst the writer, at the same time, expressed great compassion for his own condition, and hoped as he was now a reformed man, that his cousin Thomas's widow would forgive him for his poor Thomas's sake. This amount of intelligence gratified her for a time, but her affectionate and maternal heart was as we have already said both firm and persevering. She was after all the winning and true friend, and the cause of his death was not easily forgotten. The suspense and uncertainty which would have preyed upon her in the ignorance of the truth. When the worst is known we are able to exert our energies and meet the evil with courage. In all the agonies of suspense, when we are unable to quell ourselves of hope and are left in the one state of torment the suspense itself is in its worst shape in the state of uncertainty of human life and suffering and the wasting, and the more intense the suffering the only source of consolation is the hope upon which her heart hung with all its power of tenderness and affection. She is now



she could have felt the anguish of his death with less poignancy if he could but once have seen her ; and on this account she felt it as a sacred duty to love the child with an additional affection, which she looked upon as the inheritance of his heart.

In the meantime, we pass from her and her husband's fate, to a different object. A new character is beginning to develop itself in our pages, and that character resides in the person of the child we speak of, Maria Brindsley. We remember having seen her when she was about eight or nine years of age, and upon another occasion, when she was sixteen ; and we solemnly assure our readers, that the impression of the last view we had of her was such as makes us shrink back from the very idea of attempting to describe her. In her case, description can do nothing. The thing is impossible, and for this reason, that neither the force of the most powerful imagination, nor the highest ideal conception of beauty, whether taken from our knowledge of nature or of art, could enable us to reach any notion whatsoever of the standard which she presented. We dare not, therefore, attempt

a portrait, and we shall not. All we can say is, that the light of youth and beauty seemed to emanate like effulgence from her face, and the glory of her eye to stand alone and unparalleled among women. Horace, indeed, appears to have had some conception of it, when he spoke of the *vultus nimium lubricus aspici*—a countenance too bright to be looked upon ; but, indeed, there are some female faces whose tints are so delicately beautiful, that neither art nor artist can snatch a grace sufficiently exquisite and ethereal to do them justice. Such was that of Maria Brindsley, when we saw her in her sixteenth year. All we have said, however, is nothing. She must have been seen, and then, indeed, the divine charm of her beauty would have startled, astonished, and entranced the beholder—as it never failed to do.

Martha Brindsley, for such was her mother's Christian name, had now, next to her own salvation, but one object of solicitude upon earth. She devoted herself to the care and comfort of her angelic little daughter, with an anxiety and tenderness that were their own reward. The child was the admiration of all who knew and

saw her, and well did it become her mother to love and cherish her as she did, for from the very earliest period of her infancy, never did she occasion even one temporary pang to that mother's heart. She was put to school, where she soon distinguished herself among her little female companions, and surpassed them as much in intellect as she did in natural grace and beauty. Having learned reading, writing, and some smattering of accounts, her education was considered sufficiently advanced for all the purposes of her humble life ; and after her withdrawal from school, she devoted herself to the acquisition of her mother's knowledge of dressmaking. From this period until her subsequent removal from her mother's roof, there is, with *one exception*, but little to be recorded of her innocent and affectionate life. The exception, however, which we allude to, we shall now detail.

Her mother's cottage, to which was attached about half a rood of garden, that stretched longitudinally behind it, stood upon the edge of a beautiful little green, which was considered as a kind of common, for no one ever thought of breaking it up or cultivating it. Indeed, no

one would be permitted to do so, as it was considered sacred to the sports and amusements of the youngsters of both sexes in the village ; and, besides, possessed what is called the right of commonage. The scenery around it, especially in the summer time, was soft, serene, and beautiful. The land was devoted more to pastoral than agricultural pursuits—a circumstance which gave to it an aspect delightfully verdant, of which even winter could not deprive it. It consisted of low undulating hills, graceful in their outlines, with sketches of rich meadow between them, through the latter of which a clear but gentle river wound its serpentine course. Many warm-looking farm-houses, most of them white and comfortable, gave a peculiar spirit of happiness and animation to the landscape.

About a couple of miles above, rose a mass of mountain ridges to the east, peaked and covered with the richest heath ; and when the crimson light of the setting sun fell upon them, it appeared to the eye as if they had been transfigured by his radiance into a purple glory, which seemed like the operation of some grand and superhuman enchantment, that had turned

them into gold. And then again, how many pastoral and rural sounds, peculiar to those remote and happy districts of life, might be heard during the progress and close of a summer evening. How many youngsters of both sexes were abroad upon the banks of the river, engaged, the males in athletic and amusing sports, and the females in the lower swamps of the meadows in collecting the honey dew as it hung richly on the tall corn-like grass with which it was loaded. Then come the various sounds of rural life, as they arise in the silence of the approaching twilight—the sweet song of the country-girl, as she milks her cow—the careless song of the labourer as he returns from his toil—the mingling of young and joyful voices in the adjoining meadows, and a thousand other happy sounds with which the memory of early life in the country is always enriched.

One Saturday evening, about the middle of summer, there was a dance upon the green we have mentioned, and the youngsters of the village and neighbourhood were, of course, assembled. The fiddler, too, being a resident among them, was, when not elsewhere engaged, in the

habit of playing for them. The good-natured man, though blind from his infancy, knew the voice and foot of every one of them, and nothing afforded him greater gratification than thus to contribute occasionally to their innocent and light-hearted amusement. On the evening in question, they were all assembled, when a considerable division or drawback from their enjoyment of the dance took place, through the appearance of an individual, then, and for a long time previously, of no little celebrity in the North of Ireland. This was Stuart, the far-famed dummy and spaeman, or fortune-teller. These Stuarts were absolutely renowned for the prophetic accuracy with which they fed the public appetite for an insight into futurity. It would seem that they must have intermarried within the forbidden degrees, otherwise it is impossible that almost every individual of the family should have been deaf and dumb. 'Tis true we know that this melancholy privation, like many other maladies, is always hereditary ; but be this as it may, almost every man and woman of the Stuart race seem to have been deaf and dumb from their birth. That much gross imposture

may have been practised by them, there is little or no doubt, but the evidences of their privation were too severely tested to allow them to impose upon the public in the matter of speech and hearing. We believe the family is now extinct, for after many inquiries, we have not been able to trace or hear of them for several years. The only man of them we ever saw was the individual of whom we are about to speak. He was tall and thin, and of a weather-beaten, sallow complexion. We were then very young, and looked upon him with a kind of reverence that was strongly imbued with sensations of pain and fear. That, however, which impressed us most disagreeably, was the noise which seemed to proceed from his temples whilst eating his food. It resembled a small dull knocking against an empty vessel, and proceeded evidently from some malformation in the sutures or joinings between the upper jaw-bones and the skull. Something like this must have been the case, because at every mastication they shot out on both sides of the face, in a line with the eyes, in a manner that was both startling and disagreeable, and


especially as their motion seemed to occasion the noise.

His appearance upon the present occasion threw a change over the light spirit which had animated the enjoyment of the young folks then assembled on the common.

“Here is Stuart the dummy ; he will tell all our fortunes !” and immediately, as he approached, a crowd of young and eager, but timid faces, gathered about him. Indeed, there is a strange combination in the feelings which are entertained for either man or woman who is supposed to possess the power of raising the veil of futurity. Fear, modified by curiosity, and an anxiety to hear, if possible, what the outlines or leading events of our life may be, constitutes the mood of mind in which we solicit their predictions ; and, indeed, we think that were it not for the influence of love and ambition—the two great principles of life—very few could be found anxious to approach such persons at all, possessed, as they are supposed to be, by a strange and supernatural mystery. At all events, the wild-looking old man was surrounded by the young folk ; some of those who possessed least



fear and more assurance, approaching boldly, and intimating, as well as they could by signs, that they wished him to spae their fortunes ; whilst others, more timid and apprehensive, kept aloof, and stood at a cautious distance. The fortune-teller seemed rather displeased, and signified, somewhat angrily, that he would tell them nothing. In the meantime, he cast his eyes about, and discovering Maria Brindsley, standing with apparent awe and timidity at a distance, he beckoned her to approach him, and after having contemplated her beautiful features and exquisite little figure—she was then about twelve—he placed his hand upon her head, with an expression of great benignity, and taking her along with him, proceeded to her mother's cottage. Having arrived there, he shut the door with his own hands, in order to keep out the crowd, who were pressing to follow him into the house. He then made signs to her mother to procure him the materials for writing ; and having received them, he once more contemplated the little girl's features for a long time, and with intense earnestness ; then examined the palm-lines of her hand, with equal attention, and having



apparently satisfied himself, he retired into an inner room, fetching the pen, ink, and paper along with him. Here he remained for at least an hour, not, certainly, writing during all that period, as was evident from the noise of his step, as he paced the room. At length there was a silence of about fifteen minutes, during which they took it for granted that he was committing the chief incidents of her future fate and fortunes to paper, and in a few minutes they hoped to have the mysterious scroll laid before them.

Maria herself, though young, felt her position a trying one. 'Tis true her future destiny might be bright, and agreeable, and happy—but what if it should prove to be the reverse of all this? The alternations of hope and fear might be read in the varying expression of her anxious countenance, which was now pale as death, and anon flushed into the hue of crimson by the trepidation and tumult which agitated her heart. Her mother, all whose hopes of earthly happiness were centred in her sweet and beautiful child, experienced an anxiety so deep, that she regretted her compliance with the wish of the old spaeman.

"I am sorry," she said, addressing her assistants, "that I consented to this piece of folly at all. The man can know nothing of what's to happen to us in the future ; and if he foretels evil, it may break down the spirits of my child, and make her miserable and unhappy."

"Not a bit, mother," replied Maria, collecting her energy, "it doesn't matter what he may foretel ; because if it happens to be bad, I will do what you always told me to do—that is, to trust in God—which I will do, and then if I don't deserve the evil, God won't let it come upon me."

As the noble girl spoke, her cheek mantled, and her eye flashed with resolution and energy, and we may add, too, with early piety.

"No, mother," she added, "I am not afraid now, and don't you, mother, either. What is the whole thing, after all, but a joke?"

Stuart now made his appearance in the kitchen, with a paper folded like a letter in his hand, Mrs. Brindsley signed to him that she wished to see it, but he shook his head forbiddingly, and intimated that he wished to have sealing-wax. This was procured in a few min-

utes, when, to their utter astonishment, he immediately sealed up the paper, and handed it to her mother, accompanied with an open slip, on which was written the following words :—

“ I lay it upon you, as a strict and solemn obligation, that this paper is not to be opened or read until your daughter’s marriage day—after the ceremony. The disregarding of this obligation is likely to be her ruin ; and if you wish her to avoid evil in many shapes, and most of all from her own heart, you will not attempt to do it. I see what is before her, but it is for her own good that she should not know it until the time I mention. On that day this prophecy of her fortune will be fulfilled. CHARLES STUART.”

Maria, on hearing this read, said :—

“ Very well, mother, sign to him that we will act in obedience to his wishes.”

The mother accordingly did so, upon which he once more approached Maria, looked upon her with evident complacency and satisfaction, and taking her hand, he placed it on her own heart, and turning up his eyes, pointed towards heaven.

“ He means, darling,” observed her mother,

“that if you fear God, and put your trust in heaven, there will be no danger. His face, too, seems full of satisfaction, which surely would not be the case if he thought or knew that there was evil before you.”

She then put her hand in her pocket, in order to offer him money, but, observing her intention, he abruptly, and somewhat angrily, prevented her, and having raised his hand solemnly to enforce the obligation which he had imposed upon her, he once more pointed to the open paper, lest he might be misunderstood, after which he took his departure, with that slow and solemn pace which was peculiar to him.

This incident created quite a sensation in the little world about them. The neighbours, both young and old, flocked in to hear Maria's fortune, but on finding that it was a sealed document, their curiosity, especially that of the women, was inflamed to such a pitch, that poor Mrs. Brindsley felt herself and her daughter literally in a state of persecution. They were assailed by every variety of logic and eloquence, not to omit piety, friendship, sincere interest for their welfare, and the natural feelings of good

neighbourhood ; for through all those shapes and disguises did curiosity pass. If curiosity, however, assumed so many aspects, so also did rumour. In the course of a few days the whole neighbourhood seemed to have been made perfectly well acquainted with the full particulars of this most mysterious affair, but as every account of it differed from another, her acquaintances flocked to her for the purpose of hearing the authentic version.

The first that entered was her next-door neighbour, Mrs. Nelson, who, having taken her seat, commenced with all the adroitness of a diplomatist, to insinuate herself into the secret. She drew, however, a very wide circle around the question, but with singular tact contrived to narrow it gradually, and as if without design, until she could get Mrs. Brindsley into what is termed a vicious circle, in other words, a circle from which she could not escape without giving up the information required.

After the usual salutations, Mrs. Nelson introduced that original topic, the weather.

“ Well, Mrs. Brindsley, was there ever seen such weather as this, praise be to goodness ? ”

"It's blessed weather, Mrs. Nelson."

"It is indeed, and we ought to be thankful for it, which I'm afeard we are not— an' the crap, too, how it promises. We intend to try the new praties on Saturday. Indeed, Billy" (her husband) "says we might 'a' done it a fortnight ago, but it's betther to wait till they get a bone in them, than to dig them when they're nothin' but blobs of wather."

"True enough, indeed, Mrs. Nelson."

"Ay, and how beautiful the evenin's are ! Wasn't last Saturday a delightful day ? and indeed it's but seldom that Woolty" (William) "Rutledge is at home of a Saturday evenin'— and wasn't it lucky that the youngsters got him for their dance, poor things—sorrow on that spaeman, he knocked it up on them."

"Well, but sure it was their own fault, Mrs. Nelson, and not his. Why didn't they mind their dance, and pay no attention to him ?"

"That's true, indeed ; but, still, its only natural for young people to wish for a knowledge

of their fortunes. There's Billy\*—my husband—that remembers the Peep-o'-day boys, and he says he was tould by one of the Stuarts that his wife's Christian name was to be Kate, and you know he was right. They say he took a great fancy to your Maria—is it true?"

"Why, indeed, it seems so—he came home with her."

"And, I'll go bail, tould her fortune?"

"Well, indeed, that's more than we know, Mrs. Nelson."

"Surely if he spaed her fortune, you couldn't but know it. But is it true, as they say, that he said she's to be married to an attorney?"

"Indeed, it's the first I heard of it, Mrs. Nelson!"

"And that he's to be hanged for forgery. The Lord in heaven forbid that, any way, for the poor girl's sake. Still it would be well for her to get rid of such a villain, even by the gallows. Murdher sheery! to be hanged for for-

\* This man, and the character who is now speaking, lived, *he* to reach the age of one hundred and seven years, and *she*, that of one hundred and six. They lived without spot or stain.



gery. God pity her, but she has a hard fate before her, poor child !”

“ But, in the mean time,” replied Mrs. Brindley, “ there’s not a word of truth in it.”

“ Then what *did* he tell her, Martha ?” pursued Mrs. Nelson, now becoming more familiar and insinuating—“ surely he told her *something*, eh ?”

“ Not a syllable. He wrote her fortune down, and sealed it up, and it’s not to be opened until her marriage day, when the ceremony is over.”

“ And would you submit to such a piece of villany as that, Martha ? Murdher sheery ! to keep you and the poor child on the tenter hooks until then ! Surely you won’t submit to that, any way. Of course you’ll open the paper and see what’s in it ? it may put both your child and yourself upon your guard.”

“ Indeed, and I will not, Mrs. Nelson. He said if I did—that is, he wrote it down—that if I did, it might be the ruin of my child to know it.”

“ And why should the sinner say such a thing ? Doesn’t Maria herself wish to know it ?”

“ Not a bit, ma’am—the girl has sense beyond

her years, and has made up her mind not to read it until that time comes, as I hope it will."

"Well, all I can say is—that if I was in your place, it wouldn't be long unopened; but, indeed, Maria is a very wise child—too much so, maybe, for her years. Now, do be guided by me, and let us see it. It can do no harm at any rate, and may do a great deal of good."

"No, indeed, Mrs. Nelson, nothing on earth will tempt either of us to break it. We have made our minds up on the subject, so that neither you, nor any one else, need ever urge us to it."

"Well, my dear, I have done my duty—only I wish that you may never sup sorrow for your obstinacy—that's all. If you do, remember you were well advised, and that you scorned both the advice and the adviser."

"Don't say scorn, Mrs. Nelson; I'm obliged to you for your good wishes, but once for all, I tell you that my mind's made up on it."

Several others came with the same object, by which we mean, a flaming wish to gratify a most prurient curiosity, but all in vain. They were treated with the same civility and firmness of

spirit by Mrs. Brindsley, who thanked them for their good wishes, but declined to break the seal, or reveal the secret.

At length a more sober and sanctified form of curiosity made its appearance in the shape of a very pious woman, named Mrs. Gillespie, who came not so much to wheedle and insinuate, as to storm the citadel by Christian rebuke, and no small exhibition of spiritual alarm, for the danger in which this ungodly temporizing with Satan had placed Mrs. Brindsley and her child.

"Neighbour," she began, with clasped hands, a sigh that strongly merged into a groan, and a very devout upturning of the eyes, "a hope am about to spake to a woman that wishes to look Zionwards—a hope so—a do indeed, ahem!"

"I hope so, too, Mrs. Gillespie," replied her neighbour.

"You know," proceeded Mrs. Gillespie, "am a plain-spoken woman, and am sorry to hear that you're dealin' wi' the canthrips o' Satan, and for that matther so is Tam sorry. Is it true that this black scrowl is sealed with a cloven foot?"

"No, indeed," replied Mrs. Brindsley, "he

refused to seal it with anything but the child's own thimble."

"Well," replied Mrs. Gillespie, "all a can say is, that there's no use in keeping the unholy document sealed up. The spaeman himself couldn't, nor didn't, keep the secret. I'm informed by Paddy Hannigan that he wrote two copies of it—that he showed him one o' them—and that it said the poor lost child is to be married to an Episcopalian bishop, and *then* a'd be gled to know what's to become of her salvation, poor thing. A'd every bit as soon she'd turn Papish and marry a priest, and so would Tam, because you see there might be some chance of her convartin' the priest, but de'il a Christian alive could hould any hope of convartin' sich a hardened sinner as an Episcopalian bishop."

Mrs. Brindsley could not avoid laughing heartily at the honest Presbyterian zeal of Mrs. Gillespie, and especially at her pious horror of the Episcopalian bishop.

"Well, Mrs. Gillespie," she replied, "I don't think there's the slightest chance of her marrying either a Protestant bishop or a Catholic priest. In the mean time, you are all alarmed

without any grounds, I trust, about what the spaeman has written."

"But why don't you open the paper, and read it? They say all the family of those Stuarts tell fortunes only by the Black Art, and doesn't every one know that the Black Art can be learned from nobody but Satan himself. Isn't it he that teaches them to read and write, for it's well known that they never went to school for it? A say then, Mrs. Brindsley, that your soul is in a dangerous state, if you don't open that paper and learn—ay, and let your neighbours, too, learn—what is in it. As a Christian woman a came to tell you so, and if you won't be guided by your friends, why, then, the sin and guilt of it must rest upon your own head. So you won't let us see it?" she added, as a last effort.

"No, ma'am," replied the other, "as I've made my resolution, I will keep it."

"Oh! very well, very well!" replied Mrs. Gillespie. "A fear the temptation of Satan is strong upon you, Mrs. Brindsley, and so does Tam, for he said so."


After a time, however, all this anxiety to know the secret passed away, as everything of

the kind does ; not, however, until every conceivable conjecture was made as to what it could be.

In the mean time the circumstance invested this most lovely young creature with an interest which, fair as she was, would otherwise never have been attached to her at all. She was now as it were a beautiful myth, and looked upon as one whose fate was involved in a mysterious and forbidden prediction—a prediction, too, which was known to be in existence, and which was to be disclosed only at a particular period.

It is a general opinion throughout the world, but especially among savage and barbarous tribes of people, that those individuals from whom God has withheld the divine faculty of reason, are almost generally endowed with some other gift, which is not conferred upon the rest of their fellow-creatures. In some countries the persons of fools and idiots are held sacred, and are looked upon as possessing the power of raising the veil of futurity. It is pretty well known, if we can depend upon history, that when the Pythoness gave out her revelations, she became so strongly agitated and convulsed,

that her spirit was supposed to pass from under the influence of calm and sober reason, and that her divinations were always the result of a high delirious fury, without the influence of which she could utter no prediction. Cassandra, too, the only female prophetess in Troy, was mad, and we have it upon very excellent authority, that the magicians, conjurors, and sorcerers of the dark ages were never able to reach the objects of their incantations and sorceries with success, until they became convulsed with spasmodic agonies, that reduced them to a state of the most incredible exhaustion and debility. It was, however, whilst in this state that they are said to have received their black inspirations. Upon this principle, we suppose it is, that the common people attribute the privilege of prediction to the deaf and dumb, as a compensation for the want of speech and hearing. Still, with respect to the Stuart family in the north of Ireland, we are of opinion, upon more mature reflection, that they must have been impostors, as it was known that almost every one of them could read and write. Having closed these reflections, we now resume our narrative, and return to our heroine.



## CHAPTER II.

MRS. CLINTON'S INTEREST IN MARIA, AND THE CAUSE OF IT—  
THE VERY ORIGINAL LOVE OF WILLIAM WALLACE, THE  
YOUNG MINISTER.

THE figure of Maria Brindsley gradually developed itself into all the exquisite proportions of a Grecian statue, with drapery almost as simple. As she grew up, she became not merely the admiration, but the wonder of the neighbourhood—nor was her beauty confined to that contracted limit. Her light, agile, and graceful step was a charm even to look at. When playing on the green, her sylph-like motions reminded one of those of the fawn or antelope. She flew rather than ran ; and when lit up into the roseate warmth and excitement which resulted from the free and boundless enjoyment of exercise, it was impossible to look at her without feeling one's self literally enchained by a species of enchantment. Yet so full of sweetness and affection was her disposition, that, notwithstanding the wonderful



superiority of her beauty and person, she was never known to have an enemy among young persons of her own sex. On the contrary, she was as much the centre of love among them, as she was of admiration.


After she had betaken herself to her mother's business, nothing could surpass her industry, or her anxiety to improve in it. When she had reached her sixteenth year, she had gained all the information on the subject which her mother, who was self-taught and ignorant of the trade as an art, could teach her. 'Tis true her mother, until then, had wrought only for the humbler classes—that is to say, from the daughters of the decent farmer down to the humble servant-maid. Now, however, a higher class, attracted by a curiosity which arose from the reputation of her extraordinary beauty, began to call to her mother's house, to ascertain if she could undertake to execute their orders. This, however, she uniformly declined, unless in such plain and simple matters as she felt herself capable of managing with success.

In the meantime, she was frequently receiving advice from the ladies of the neighbourhood to

place her daughter in some respectable establishment, where she could become acquainted with the more refined and elegant operations of that delicate and beautiful art ; but, alas ! there was no such establishment within her reach, and she could almost as soon part with her life as with her daughter. Several ladies throughout the parish, charmed with the natural grace of her manner and her beauty, offered to get her a place in some of the most fashionable establishments in the metropolis, but to those kind offers the mother never could assent, although she warmly expressed her gratitude for their goodness and generosity in making them. Maria was now past sixteen ; and nothing could surpass the propriety and modest grace of her conduct and manner. Nature seemed to have stamped the impress of a lady upon her. Several offers of marriage were now made, both to herself and through her mother, many of them highly advantageous, indeed, such as no girl in her position of life could expect but herself, yet she declined them all very humbly, and with many thanks, assuring the parties that she was too young to entertain any notion of matrimony,

and that, besides, she could not for a moment think of leaving her mother, to whom her industry was necessary, and who, besides, had no other child but herself. All this raised her very high in the opinion of every one who heard of her decisions. Her motives were respected, and she was as generally praised as much for her good sense as her beauty.

Indeed, at this period she was subjected to much and incessant temptation. Many young and wealthy profligates laid traps and snares for her, which required a character of singular virtue and extraordinary firmness to escape and resist. Many dishonourable and seductive offers were made to her, which she rejected with indignation and scorn. When at church, every eye was upon her ; and when in fair or market she was followed by crowds, a circumstance which was peculiar to the public appearance of other rustic beauties, as well as to her. She now came to the resolution of avoiding public places as much as possible, with the exception of church, at which she was a regular attendant, but always accompanied by her mother. Indeed, of late, and ever since those disgraceful importunities



had become so frequent, she never went anywhere unless under her protection, or the escort of some steady friend. The truth is, she led a most uncomfortable and unpleasant life ; and if it had been possible for her mother to leave the neighbourhood altogether, she would have done so. This, however, was out of the question. She could not think for a moment of removing from the reach of those friends, by whose custom and kindness she and her child were supported in the exercise of their humble skill and industry.

About this time, an old lady, in a distant part of the parish, who had heard much of her beauty, and of the temptations to which she was in the habit of being subjected, after having made herself well acquainted with the circumstances, drove to Mrs. Brindsley's cottage, and asked to see her.

"I wish," said she, "to have some private conversation with you ; and it is, I think, of importance to yourself."

Mrs. Brindsley was somewhat embarrassed, because the only neat little apartment into which she could have asked her was the parlour, and

that was their working room. She soon recovered her presence of mind, however, and requested the workwomen and her daughter to retire to the garden, until she should send for them. She then brought her visitor in, and having placed a chair, asked her to sit down. The good lady did so ; and having gazed through the window into the garden, where Maria and the workwomen were walking, she contemplated the former with apparently a deep interest—an interest much deeper than poor Mrs. Brindsley was aware of at the time, but which our readers will very soon understand.

This lady, whom we shall call by the name of Clinton, was a woman of high connections, both by her own family and that of her husband. She was very proud in her own circle, but she was kind, unassuming, and proverbially benevolent out of it. In the ordinary intercourse of life, she was liberal-minded, generous both in her feelings and sentiments, and accomplished as well in her natural intellect as in her education. The aristocratic principle, however, was strong in her, and no woman living ever manifested a prouder disposition to maintain the

doctrine of social *caste* than she did. And yet she was remarkable for an unusual degree of that artlessness of disposition and simplicity of character, which are uniformly inseparable from a kind and beneficent heart. Altogether, she was the most popular woman in that part of the country. Having given this slight sketch of her, we shall proceed to detail the conversation which took place between her and Mrs. Brindsley.

"That is a beautiful girl of yours, Mrs. Brindsley," said Mrs. Clinton. "What do you intend to do with her? Don't you think it is time she was settled in life?"

"Why, ma'am," replied Mrs. Brindsley, "she is little more than a child yet. Only entering her seventeenth year. As for marriage, she has no thoughts of it; and, besides, I can assure you, that no temptation or offer of that kind could ever induce her to leave me. She is the most affectionate and dutiful child that ever drew the breath of life; and, indeed, I scarcely think I could part with her."

"Well, that is but natural, and I am not surprised at it. She is much spoken of."

"How ma'am?" replied her mother, alarmed—not to her disadvantage, I trust?"

"Certainly not, Mrs. Brindsley, but for her good qualities and virtues; but especially for her extraordinary beauty. Now, I am come to speak to you as a friend; and let me tell you, Mrs. Brindsley, that placed as she is, without a father to protect her, beauty is too frequently a fatal gift."

"God forbid," replied her mother, "that it should be so to her!"

"Well, in her case, I do not say it is; and, I trust sincerely, that it will not be so. But, you know yourself, that where such extraordinary beauty and personal perfections as she is possessed of, appear in an humble girl, in a country village surrounded by young gentlemen, possessed *all* of wealth, some of insinuating manners, handsome in person, and, very probably, profligate in principle;—I say, Mrs. Brindsley, that when that beautiful girl of yours is placed, as she is, within a circle of such temptations, at the most dangerous period of life, it is your duty to remove her beyond their reach if you can."

“Madam,” replied Mrs. Brindsley, with something of the mother’s indignant pride, “I am not afraid of my daughter. She has no love but that for me, her mother ; and, besides, Mrs. Clinton, young as she is, she lives in the fear of God. I admit that many attempts have been made to lead her from the right path, but they have all failed, and she has made her mother’s ear and her mother’s heart acquainted with every secret of her life.”

“I am glad to hear you confirm what I have heard from other sources, Mrs. Brindsley ; but I beg you to reflect that your daughter is very inexperienced, and ignorant of the wiles of men, and that although she may have resisted so far, it is not impossible that the hour and the tempter may come, at a moment when her own heart may betray her. Few, indeed, fall in this world under any circumstances, whether in ambition or love, upon a first temptation ; but, on the contrary, we well know that many have maintained long and noble struggles, yet have fallen at last. The great art of prudence, Mrs. Brindsley, is either to remove the temptation, or to avoid it. There is a celebrated author—



an Irishman—named Goldsmith, whose advice is, that we ought to have recourse to flight—

“And when we cannot conquer, learn to fly.”

Now, I say, you cannot remove the temptations from your daughter, but you may remove your daughter from the temptations.”

“There is a great deal of truth in what you say, madam,” replied Mrs. Brindsley, “but I do not like to hear anything that would weaken the trust of a mother in the virtue and purity of her child.”

“May God forbid, Mrs. Brindsley, that ever I should do so ; but I speak to you as a woman who has had more experience in life, and upon a much larger scale than you could possibly have had. I am, perhaps, better aware of the danger to which your daughter is exposed than you are or than you can be. My son, the lieutenant, a young man—and a very handsome one, I can assure you—is now at home on leave of absence from his regiment, which is stationed in Killenny. Well, he saw your daughter at church, and as you and she came out with the rest of the congregation, I could perceive that he waited

until she made her appearance. I saw him look at her ; I saw her return his look, and blush deeply at the moment. Now, I wish you to call her in, and ask her if she can deny it."

"No, madam," replied Mrs. Brindsley, reddening with something like indignation, "I shall not insult my child by complying with such an unfeeling request. Your son may have stared at her in an unbecoming and offensive manner; and if so, it was very natural that either she or any other modest girl should blush with anger at such an improper liberty. Still, from all I ever heard of your son, he has the character of being an honourable and gentlemanly young man, and is well spoken of by every one who knows him; I cannot think *he* would stare at her."

"He did not stare at her ; his look—for I observed them both well—was exceedingly respectful; but yet she blushed when she returned it."


"Did she return it in an unbecoming manner—in an immodest manner?" asked her mother.

"Certainly not," replied Mrs. Clinton ; "it

was but a glance ; her eyes instantly fell, and immediately her cheeks became crimson."

"Goodness me !" said Mrs. Brindsley, "all this is very natural, and surely has nothing in it discreditable to my child."

"I don't mean to insinuate any thing of the kind," replied Mrs. Clinton, "because I don't believe it ; but the foolish boy has been talking of nothing else than your daughter for the last month. Unfortunately, he has never been a church-goer, but it happened that upon his return on leave we brought him to church the first Sunday ; and whatever may have been the reason of it, he has been a regular attendant ever since—a thing which was very unusual with him. He says he is about to write to-morrow for another month's leave of absence—and—and—in truth I fear—in fact I don't exactly know what to say. In the mean time, think of what I have mentioned to you ; reflect upon it ; and if you wish to have your daughter improved in her business, and removed from temptation at the same time, I will enable you to accomplish it. In a few days I will call again, when we can talk at more length upon



the proposal I have to make to you ; but I am now in a hurry, and must be going. This is Monday—say Thursday—I shall call again on Thursday.”

The good-natured but anxious lady then took her departure, and Mrs. Brindsley began to reflect upon the conversation they had had, and to fear that there *might* be some cause of apprehension in it. Lieutenant Clinton was one of the handsomest young men in the county ; but then he was universally beloved for a high sense of generosity and honour. He was neither a seducer nor a profligate, but always manifested himself as a warm friend to his father's tenantry, whenever any dispute or difficulty occurred between the old gentleman and them. All those good qualities, however, might be the more dangerous to her daughter, who was herself, as she well knew, of a kindred disposition. Then came his handsome person, the most dangerous point in the whole argument, especially when associated with such noble and excellent qualities—qualities which had made him so popular throughout the whole county.

“ Well,” said she, “ I am her mother ; and after what Mrs. Clinton has said, I feel that I would neglect my duty if I did not speak to Maria upon the subject.”

Accordingly on that night, after the assistants had gone home, she addressed her daughter as follows :

“ Maria, my darling, I believe you have never kept a secret from me.”

Now, we must say, before we give Maria's answer, that, from the moment Mrs. Clinton left the house, Mrs. Brindsley fancied that she could observe an uneasiness and embarrassment of manner about her daughter, such as she had never noticed before. Maria, she remarked, frequently looked at her furtively, precisely as if she entertained some suspicion of the topic of conversation which had been discussed in her absence. This certainly gave her mother some concern.

“ Maria, my darling, I believe you have never kept a secret from me.”

“ No, mother, I don't think I ever did ; I had no secrets to keep from you.”

The mother now resolved to take her, as it were, unawares, put the following unexpected question to her :

“ Maria, you have often seen Lieutenant Clinton, that the whole world praises so much. What do you think of him ?”


Maria’s eyes, which had been fixed with an eager and interrogatory look upon her mother, now fell, and for a time she made no reply; but to her mother’s astonishment, and, we may add, consternation, the blush so significantly alluded to by Mrs. Brindsley overspread her whole face and neck.

The mother’s heart sank—she became struck with alarm and dismay, and for a time had scarcely breath to repeat the question.

“ My dear Maria, you do not answer me,” she said, with that searching and authoritative voice which is peculiar to parents, and so embarrassing to daughters under such circumstances.

Maria did *not* answer her, but she raised her eyes, looked upon her, and when she did, her mother saw that those beautiful eyes were filled with tears.

Mrs. Brindsley was a woman of great good sense, and had herself known what love was in its fullest strength. To catechise her daughter further on this subject, she thought would be injudicious, and might occasion more harm than good ; and indeed we think she was right. When the barb of the arrow has entered, and remains there, it is not by forcibly attempting to drag it out, that the patient can be relieved. Every such effort only aggravates the pain, and ultimately sends it deeper into the wound, which consequently becomes more inflamed and dangerous. Independently of this, she had made the painful and melancholy discovery, that the unequal love existed, and it now only remained for her to reflect upon the most efficacious means of saving her child, without exciting that agitation of the heart, which only adds fuel to the flame, and renders the object of our love still dearer, by making us feel that we are suffering for its sake. On this occasion, she took up some work, and seemed to take no further notice of what had occurred. Still the contemplation of this unconscious disclosure on the part of her daughter, filled her with dread and




alarm ; but she resolved, if possible, either to change the current of her affections, or to place her, as Mrs. Clinton had suggested, beyond the reach of temptation, from the quarter in which the danger lay.

This world is a great mystery. There lived about two miles from her cottage, a respectable and wealthy Presbyterian man named Wallace, possessed of a large farm which had been occupied by his family ever since the reign of James the First, under whom they came to the North of Ireland as settlers. This man held his land at an almost nominal rent, and besides being an intelligent agriculturist, was engaged extensively in the linen manufacture. He was supposed to have been worth about eight or nine thousand pounds ; but on his death, which occurred about ten years ago, it was found that this estimate, liberal as it was, fell short of the truth. His eldest son was married, and lived with his father, and his younger brother had just entered into the Presbyterian ministry, as an assistant in his native parish, which was extensive, and contained a large Presbyterian population. The name of this young man was William, and up



until the present period of our narrative, he had lead a studious and literary life—passing through the world as if he did not belong to it, and apparently unconscious of its noisy tumults, and the events which were passing around him. Never remarkable for robust health, and consequently of rather a delicate constitution ; he was pale, bashful, and retreating in his manners ; gentle, calm, and of a silent disposition. The most remarkable trait about him, notwithstanding a fine and cultivated intellect, was a simplicity of character, and an ignorance of the forms and usages of society so extraordinary, that perhaps they were seldom, if ever, equalled. He did not seem to know, or to feel that there existed such a thing as falsehood in the world, and, we need scarcely add, that he was credulous almost to a miracle, and so easily imposed on that a child might make him ridiculous. Yet of these singular feelings he was utterly unconscious, and what was the most painful reflection of all to his friends, it was found that no experience, no advice, no remonstrance, nor any discovery of his own errors in this respect could ever produce the slightest improvement




in his conduct or habits of thought. And strange to say, when discussing any moral, religious, or literary subject, he expressed himself with such lucidity of thought, such copiousness of language, and such eloquence, as generally astonished those who heard him. This unaccountable union of simplicity, absence of mind, and high intellect, are, however, by no means uncommon, and many eminent instances might be produced in proof of this, if it were necessary to do so. His figure might be considered tall, but his whole demeanor, though grave and sedate, was graceful and gentlemanly. He was an accomplished scholar, considering his age, and was an enthusiastic admirer of our best poets, having, to admit the truth, devoted as much of his time and more of his inclination to the study of poetry than to that of divinity, although the latter had been by no means either neglected or undervalued. Until recently he appeared to enter with considerable zeal and success into the spirit of his mission. A change, however, of some sort most assuredly had come over him ; he became, if possible, more secluded from life, altogether avoided society, the energy

of his eloquence in the pulpit seemed to have been spent ; its fire, its elevation, its persuasion, its pathos were nearly all gone ; and it would appear, and was observed, that he spoke now like a person whose heart was absent from his ministry, if not actually engaged in the pursuit of some other object. Such, alas ! was the fact. The mild enthusiasm of this young man, nourished, as it was, by a sensitive and poetic temperament, in addition to that which never fails to accompany them—a susceptible heart, had been transferred to the love of a being who now appeared before him as the living ideal of all female grace and beauty. He had, indeed, never dreamt of such a creature, even although his imagination had been early engaged upon the most exquisite descriptions of the classic models. Poor Wallace ; gentle, susceptible, and without much strength of character, fell an easy, almost a helpless victim, to the fascinating charms of this beautiful young creature. His passion for her preyed upon him, absorbed all his faculties, and rendered the face of man and of woman too, almost disagreeable to him. His chief delight was to withdraw into the solitudes

of the beautiful and still glens with which the neighbourhood abounded, and there stroll about contemplating the loveliness of that image which was ever, ever, ever before his eye, as distinctly as if she herself had been there in reality.

William Wallace was a general favourite. He was mild, beneficent, and charitable ; his sweet and gentle smile was accorded to all who knew him ; and many a tear did he silently shed over the bed of poverty and affliction. His means were not stinted, and well and piously were they applied to the struggling and the destitute ; but always under the solemn injunction of secrecy. This state of feeling, however, soon became one of suffering ; and it was probable that he would never have summoned sufficient courage to "tell his love," had not his brother accidentally discovered it. He had, like most studious persons, been always of absent and abstracted habits ; but now he became so to such a degree as to surprise those who had known him best. He got into fits of musing so deep and dream-like, that he unconsciously uttered many soliloquies aloud ; and as the object of those soliloquies was generally the object of his passion, it was only

natural that he should frequently utter her name. By this means his brother, who loved him with the deepest affection, discovered the state of his heart, as well as the object on which it was set. He was so well acquainted, however, with William's natural timidity of disposition and extraordinary bashfulness, that he hesitated to speak to him on the subject. The change in his ministerial habits, and the lassitude of his pulpit eloquence, were now intelligible ; but, in the mean time, what was to be done ? Some secret feeling had seemed to consume him, and not only to waste away his strength, but to affect the natural sobriety of his demeanour, by a calm yet painful eccentricity which might ultimately affect his higher powers. This secret feeling was now known, and might consequently be dealt with. The brother, therefore, on seriously considering the matter, resolved to communicate to his father the discovery he had made, in order to have the benefit of his advice and opinion. The old Presbyterian, though occasionally solemn and evangelical in his language and manner, was, nevertheless, a good deal of a humourist ; but still a kind man, who



felt deeply concerned to hear the melancholy disclosure which his eldest son made to him. He had himself observed the symptoms of abstraction and eccentricity to which we have alluded, with considerable surprise, if not with pain ; but he experienced now something like relief, on ascertaining the motives from which his son acted.

“ The first best method,” said he, “ to cure a complaint, is to know the name of it. If he’s in love wi’ her, why let him e’en marry her, if she’ll have him ; but, then, sure she’s only a wean.”

“ Well, but she has had several offers already,” replied Joe, “ young as she is, and deil a one o’ them she’d take.”

“ Hout, man, do you think she winna bounce at him ? Sure, deil haet she has but her bit painted face, poor thing. Although am not saying but she’s of a respectable breed, but sadly pulled down by the slippery turns o’ fortune, the jaud.”

“ But what’s to be done, father ?” asked the other. “ I feel for the poor fellow, because I know he will never have courage to speak

to her himself ; its really painful to see him ; and, besides, I'm not so sure how it may end. He has given himself too much to study, and they say that all studious folks are apt to be loose about the brains, and easily unsettled."

" Well, I'll tell you what am thinking," replied his father ; " just slip over to Widow Brindsley's in a quiet and confidential way, and say am willing to marry my son the minister, Willy, till her daughter ; and tell her that whether she is willing to agree to't, or whether she's not, she's to keep a *calm sugh* about the matter till *I* see her."

Now, all those circumstances, which we have related so briefly, did not run in such rapid succession as the reader may imagine. From the discovery of William's secret, until this final suggestion by his father, there passed a period of about four months ; but now the matter seemed to draw near to a conclusion of some kind.

It happened that the day selected for communicating this agreeable intelligence to Mrs. Brindsley, was that which followed Mrs. Clinton's visit. The short conversation which we

have detailed between Maria and her mother, took place on the preceding night, and on the next day came the proposal from Joe Wallace, in the name of his father, and the lover himself, who, by the way, was utterly ignorant of the whole proceeding, having almost led the life of a somnambulist. Our readers, aware as they are of the anxiety and alarm which Maria's artless confession had occasioned her mother, will not be surprised that she received the communication of Wallace with a gratified and delighted heart. She knew the respectability of their character—she knew of their wealth, and of the excellent and admirable reputation which his brother William bore throughout the country. This was certainly the highest and the most eligible offer which had yet been made to her daughter, and it came, too, at a crisis probably of such danger to her, that she looked upon it as almost, if not altogether, providential.

On hearing the proposal deliberately laid down to her, she did not, however, follow the course of her own inclinations, which would have been to give it an immediate acceptance ; on the contrary, she acted with all prudence and caution,



in the spirit of which she made the following reply :

“ I am deeply obliged to you, Mr. Wallace, for the generous offer you have made my child. Indeed, it is one she is not entitled to, and that neither she nor I could ever have dreamt of. Marriage, however, is a serious thing, and I do not wish to give an answer until I have time to consult with my daughter herself about it. I know she has no wish to marry or to separate herself from me ; but still, if I saw such a match offer as I thought she and I could both approve of, it would be selfish and unjust in me to allow her affection for me to stand in her own light. I will give her your proposal then, and after advising with her, will let you know what she may say. If you call on Thursday evening, I can have an answer for you.”

There is much sharp and original peculiarity of character among the northern Presbyterians of Ireland, who frequently do many things in a style and manner quite peculiar to themselves. The fact of making a proposal of marriage for a young man, without consulting him, or ascertaining whether he actually felt inclined to the

match or not, was certainly, at least in the mode and spirit of the proceeding, no every-day performance.

"Well," asked the father, when his son Joe returned, "what's the upshot?" The body was delighted, man—eh?"

"Why," replied his son, "the woman's a sensible woman, and asked to be allowed time to think of it, before she gives an answer."

"Time! Hout awa wi' her. Does she ask time to become related to a family like ours, that cam' in wi' James the First?"

"Don't be alarmed," replied Joe.

"Alarmed!—what for should I be alarmed? If it wasn't for the poor boy's sake, I'd never listen till't. I think he has been writing some nonsense—poetry about her—the day."

"She wishes, naturally enough, to consult her daughter," replied Joe; "for, after all, you know that, even although the mother might consent, the daughter may decline the compliment."

"In troth, then, I wouldn't much blame the poor wean if she did, for am just of opinion that whatever pit the maggots of taking a liking till her into his head, he's no just the metal for the

like o' yon lassie. Deil haet he'll do but read Greek and Latin, and maybe expound the Scriptures for her now and then, or some pottrey stuff ; that is, when he comes till himself, for he seems of late to have lost his grip o' the world altogether. Still we cannot let the poor boy break down as he's doin' if we can help it. Poor Willy ! It's come to a hard pass wi' him when he can do nothing but saunter about from morning till night in lonely places, just like a ghost—if ever such a thing was seen in daylight. Hout ! To be sure, man, the cannie widow will jump at the proposal—and why not ? Will she not get her winsome wean well settled ?”

The widow, as we have seen, took the proper view of it. Once married to young Wallace—an ordained minister of religion—she knew her daughter was rescued from danger, and could rest with confidence under the protection of her husband ; and although she knew that their separation would be painful to her in the highest degree, yet she felt it her duty to make the sacrifice when her child's welfare and respectable establishment in life were the object. Such an offer, if rejected, might never occur again. She

accordingly mentioned the matter to her, and dwelt upon its general advantages ; recounted the well-known good qualities and many virtues of the gentle and studious young minister, and urged her, with every motive and argument she could think of, to accept such a fortunate proposal.

“ You know, Maria,” she proceeded, “ that he is assistant minister in his own parish, so that we can see and be with each other whenever we wish. It is true I am but an humble woman, but then, my dear, I am a respectable woman, and you, by your father’s side, at least, are of a better family even than themselves. It is such a proposal as may never come in your way again.”

In reply, Maria was kind and affectionate to her mother, but unfortunately for that mother’s hopes, she was adamant.

“ Mother,” she replied, “ I think you are to blame, to ask so young a girl as I am to marry. I don’t wish to marry for some time to come. Why, I am not full-grown yet, and very little beyond sixteen.”

“ You are just closing your seventeenth, Maria.”

“ Well, mother, that matters but little ; but, let me ask, what has changed you so much, and all of a sudden, too, upon this subject ? You never pressed me in this manner before.”

“ Because you never received such an offer before, Maria.”

“ Well, my dear mother, I have only the same answer to give. If I felt disposed to marry anyone, I would surely give a preference to that good and gentle young man. In short, mother, I wish to wait a little longer, and, to say the truth, I neither will nor can marry him ; and you may take my word, I will never marry any man that I don't love. I don't love him ; and that's my last answer.”

“ Very well, my dear,” replied her mother, “ we will drop the subject. I cannot think of pressing you to marry Mr. Wallace, since you cannot like him, and when I next see his brother I will put an end to the business at once, by telling him so.”

## CHAPTER III.

MRS. CLINTON'S PROJECT FOR MARIA—OLD SAM WALLACE FAILS AS A DIPLOMATIST—SEPARATION OF MARIA FROM HER MOTHER.

GENTLY, and in a spirit of civility and the most grateful respect, did Mrs. Brindsley communicate to Joseph Wallace her daughter's rejection of his proposals on behalf of his amiable brother ; and when he, on his return, communicated the unsuccessful issue to his father, the old man seemed sadly puzzled.

"Eh, man," said he, "what's to be done now ? The poor lad will go stark upon't. I say, what's to be done, Joe ?"

"Why," replied the son, "I think the best way is to say nothing about it. The unlucky turn of the affair will only make him worse, I fear."

"No, no," replied his father ; "the best way is to try and scower the nonsense clean out of him, by telling him at once how the case stands.

That, however, must be my ain job ; leave him to me. The poor besotted haval, wi' all his knowledge, passes that cottage of her's twice a day, I'm tauld, going to and coming from yon dismal glen in Springtown. Deil scaud the neb of her, but she was hard to please, the young jaud !”

“ I'm afraid, father,” said Joe, “ you'll only make matters worse ; you had better leave him to me.”

“ Deil a bit,” replied the old man. “ I understand those whigmaleeries better than you do. When all's done, it's only a noddle cholic, and we must see and get the wind out of his head some gate. He's inside now, at his books by himsel', so I'll go and hae a spell o' pure downright logic wi' him. I remember my own nonsense when I was crouse about your mither, dacent woman.”

He accordingly entered his son William's room, and found him writing.

“ Well, man,” said he, “ what the deil ! have you not got book learning enough to satisfy you for the rest of your life ?”

His son looked on him and smiled, for the

father, unless on the Sabbath, or when in some decidedly religious mood, seldom had recourse to his evangelical oratory ; but, on the contrary, as he possessed a good deal of shrewd dry humour, as we've said, so did he without scruple or hesitation indulge in it.

"Father," he replied, "you know we can never acquire too much knowledge."

"I dinna ken that," replied the old man. "I'm fear't it's no that safe to overstock your head wi' too much of it. It weakens the brains, and disna leave them fit for their functions. It's no' healthy for common sense 'am thinking ; but anent yon bonnie wean o' the widow's that has pit you asteer? Am guessing you're nothing but a very green guse in the business. Deil's cure to you !—Why hadn't you mair sense than to fasten your fancy upon a poor bit lassie, that hasn't a shift to her back. There now, you're daundering and maundering about like a stray turkey, for the last four or five months—groanin' and moonin' like an auld wife in the cholic, writing and repeating bletherin' rhymes and nonsense soliloquies about her, and she doesna' care a boddle for you, skin, flesh, and bone. soul



and body. Hout, man, have common sense ; be a man, and not like an unfortunate lassie in the green sickness. Troth, I wadna be surprised to see you cranching the cinders, to-morrow or next day—hout, awa ! fie for shame !”

The son’s face, at all times pale and intellectual-looking, became, during the latter part of this address, the colour of scarlet ; his hands trembled, and the look of astonishment and distress which he turned upon his father was pitiable.

“ Father,” said he, “ what is it you mean ? What are you speaking about ? What have you observed about me, that you should talk thus ?”

“ Why, don’t we all know that you’re dreaming, night and day—and mair especially when you’re awake—about that great beauty they call Mary or Maria Brindsley. Aren’t you just beside yourself about her ; and, I tell you, if it was known out of the family, which, thanks be praised, it is not, you’d hae but a poor chance of continuing your popularity, as they ca’ it. As it is, you’re beginnin’ to fag and stagger in your pulpit work.”

The poor young clergyman rose up, but almost immediately sat down again.

"Father," said he, "forgive me ; but, come how it may, you have got possession of my secret. How it happened I know not ; but I will not deny the truth."

"Poor lad," said the father, much moved at his distress, "I see you are unhappy about her, but it is better you should know the worst at once. When that is known, we can recruit our courage, and make a better fight of it. However, in the meantime, it is but right you should know it ; the lassie has rejected you."

"Rejected me ! In the name of truth, let me understand you. I never breathed a word of my love for her to a human being, much less to herself ; then how could she reject me ?"

"Breathed it—nonsense, man—you breathed and blethered her name, as if she had been strayed or stolen, and you were the market crier, sent to publish it. Didn't Joe hear you often, and myself. And when we discovered what you were after, we put our heads together, and Joe went to her mother and proposed for her in your name. The poor widow, it seems, was willing enough, but the lassie hersel', although she talked of you wi' respect, said she wad hae you at no

rate ; that she wasna disposed to marry, but that if she was, you should hae a preference, which was all very fair ; but, at any rate, it's all up wi' ye yonder."

The pallor of death itself was not so deadly looking as that which now blanched the cheeks of the unfortunate young man. He covered his face with his hands, and bent his head down upon the desk at which he sat ; and his father could perceive that he was endeavouring to conceal his tears. The old man himself felt deep compassion for him, and began to regret the tone in which he had addressed him. He resolved, however, if possible, to afford consolation, for, in truth, he felt alarmed at the condition to which this unhappy passion had reduced him.


"Come, man," said he, "show better spirit ; what signifies a single refusal frae ane o' these saucy queens ; don't they say nineteen o' them's as good as a consent. Dinna be downput. We'll hae at her again. Tuts ! faint heart, you know, never won fair lady. Come, cock your bonnet, man, and keep the crown o' the causeway. I'll go bail we bring her to yet, and that I'll call her daughter-in-law, as they say in Scotland,

before a twomonths gaes past. Me ! deil a ring ever I'd hae puttin' on your mother, if I had been fool enough to take to the weeping at her first refusal. No, haith ! I knew better than all that came to, and, so in the end, I begged her off wi' flying colours."

"Father," replied the son, "I knew nothing of your proceedings in this affair ; and those tears do not proceed from the disappointment you mention, so much as from the consciousness of my own unmanly weakness. I feel now, when it is too late, that I am not qualified, either by temperament or natural energy, for the ministry into which I have so rashly entered. I did not, as I ought to have done, calculate my own strength, nor consider how unequal it was to the discharge of such solemn duties, especially with a heart so easily drawn back from the high and holy object which every minister of God should place before him. Would to heaven that I had made that calculation in time. But why do I say so ? I knew neither the fickleness nor the weakness of my own heart at the time, and now it is too late. I was safe then, only because I had not met the temptation."

“Temptation ! hout, man, deil a pickle o’ evil temptation’s about yon bonnie lassie Saul ! am thinking, gin I was about your ain age, that she’d be apt to make as great a fool o’ me as she has o’ yourself. Vara true, I was no minister. Well, even sæ, ministers themselves must and ought to marry. Nothing softens the heart like a spell o’ matrimony ; and when a man, ye ken, gets over proud or stiff-necked—deil hae me, that I should say so—but there’s always an adversary about the place to take him down a peg. Still, you know, it’s good for us to suffer—better here than hereafter—ahem ! What do you intend to do though ?”

“I know not, father, and I scarcely care. I already look upon myself as a man who has broken a solemn trust with God, by surrendering my heart, almost without an effort, to one of his creatures. I have debased my ministry, and withdrawn, I may well say, from the sanctity of my mission. I am no longer fit for it. The spirit that should animate me in the discharge of it, has been taken away from me ; my candlestick has been removed, and that as a punishment for my crime.”



“Your crime, man—what crime? Is to love the woman that’s to be your wife a crime. Saul! I think the crime would be to marry her if ye didna love her. Lord, man, so far frae being a crime, deil be off me, but it’s a rare virtue in you, and ane ye ought to be proud o’. And ’am not sayin’ sae without due reflection, and muckle observation on my ain pairt. Lord help you! look at your ain class o’ ministers—look at every class—look at them all, I say, and what’s the up-shot? See how they poke about, and watch, and reconnoitre, until they smell out some sonsie lass wi’ a long tocher; an’ gin she has the tocher, deil haet they care whether she’s sonsie or not, or handsome either; then they get on her trail; they indulge in family prayers; then they groan, sing psalms, and expound particular passages o’ Scripture; read the Bible together, cheek by cheek; dine once or twice a week (oh, poor lad, there’s one thing against you, you have no appetite; for if you wanted a rich wife, your appetite should be as lang as your sermon); take tea every second evening, and so go on playing off your holy game, until the whole family set

you down as a man o' God and a saint, and the poor lassie looks upon your black coat as only another name for charity—and maybe, deil a far she's astray, for it often covers a multitude of sins—and your white choke as the spotless garment of righteousness ; and then, to close all, you walk off wi' her some fine mornin' as your wife, wi' the deil's ain long tocher in your sporran. Houts, awa ! Do you call that clerical swindle, decent, manly, independent love, such as you're greetin' over for that bonnie creature yonder. No, haith. Worldly ! deil sich a crew o' worldly-minded lads on marriage matters as your parsons and ministers. They may differ in religious, but they're all tarred wi' the same stick in the matrimonials."

"Father," replied the son, "there is some truth in what you say—too much I fear. Mine certainly is not a selfish or a worldly love ; but then, on the other hand, it is the love of mere beauty—but *such* beauty ! Still beauty is the most superficial of all qualities, and I know not, for, indeed, I had no opportunity of knowing, when the real and actual character of this girl

is. Of her moral disposition, I know nothing ; and whether her religious views are pure and evangelical——”

“ Evangelical ! Is it evangelicals you’d expect from a wean like yon, that hasna had time to begin to think yet. Troth ! if she was evangelical at these years, I’d advise you to look sharp before you’d hae onything to say till her. I know what your sucking evangelicals, baith man and woman, generally turn out to be. Deil a thing they produce but a rank crap o’ hypocrisy, when they grow up. As for the Brindley lassie, she’s just, by all accounts, what a young lady like her ought to be, lovin’ and affectionate to her poor mother, industrious at her needle ; no gaddin’ abroad, keeps at home, but goes regularly every sabbath, hand-in-hand wi’ her mother, to that Episcopal abomination that Parson Drowsy preaches in. Whether the creature sleeps there, as weel’s the rest o’ the congregation, I dinna ken ; but I know that he cured Tam Steen, whose family came in here from Holland wi’ the Dutchman, of what they call the acute rheumatics. Poor Tam was for a fortnight and couldn’t close an eye, when



some one told him to sit under Parson Drowsy. So he went to church one Sunday on a car, was helped into a pew, and as the sermon was, fortunately, a long one, he got what he didn't get for many a day—a good sound sleep, poor man.'

"Father," said the son, "your knowledge of woman ought to be more correct than mine ; you have had much experience."

"What do you mean by that?" said the old man, taking fire—"experience!—what experience? My whole experience was confined to your mother ; and, deil be frae my soul, but I found that enough for me. I don't know that she would shine in preaching, but as a sharp and pithy lecturer, she'd dang the whole o' ye put together."

"What I was about to observe," replied his son, "was, that perhaps if the subject was re-proposed to her and her mother for further consideration, the event might become more auspicious. I should be sorry to boast of my own qualifications or gifts, but still, I trust, that if she would consent to unite her fate with mine, the union might be the means of enabling me, with recovered power, to pursue, with my former

undivided spirit, the duties of my ministry. I could send her a correct and faithful list of the prizes I won at college, and even at school, in both which places I distinguished myself at *extempore* speaking."

"Ahem!" groaned the old man; "dinna put that gift in the list, my man, for I tell ye that the moment the matrimonial knot is tied, your days of *extempore* speaking are closed. God help you! the *extempore* speaking will be all on the other side. You know what I have suffered from *extempore* speaking."

"Well, if you wish, we may leave that out; then I received three first premiums in the class of moral philosophy."

"You did! well, I'm right proud to hear that—for, let me tell you, Wolly" (Willy), "that there's no' on earth such a precious gift as that to a man that's about to enter into matrimony. If you could only join the virtue o' patience to it, as a'm a sinner before man, you might be married off-hand; and yet, wi' all your fortifications, de'il a much you'll have to spare after all. Still, it's good when you go to meet an enemy, to be weel provided wi' ammunition."

“ Well, father, all I have to say is, try again. You remember the parable of the unjust judge. Perhaps you may have better success, for, to tell you the truth, I have often read that the sex are capricious and unstable. Virgil, the great Latin poet, calls them *varium et mutabile semper*, which signifies, that women are always unsettled and changeable. Now I shall leave my case in your hands ;—make a second effort, and may heaven prosper your exertions !”

“ Vara weel,” replied the father, “ in the course of a week or ten days, we’ll see about it. We must let them draw breath, though. We must not appear to drive the bodies, nor let them think that we can’t live without them. I grant that the minister mark is against you. If you warena in ordhers now, ye could go and face her wi’ a pleasant and sportive manner, and if you found her shy and distant, you canna conceive what an effect two or three honest smacks wad hae upon her—how she’d settle up her hair, blushing wi’ an angry face, but a smile under it—and then when you took leave of her, and she refused to shake hands wi’ you’, and when you turned to look at the window that she

was leanin' out of, and you kissed your hand to her—and then, after refusing to notice you for a little, she'd give a kind of angry smile, touch her little white fingers wi' her lips, as it were to get rid o' you. Oh ! man, but woman's a draw-well, only am feart that truth's not at the bottom o't. Now, I know all this, my lad, frae my experience wi' your mother, ahem ! Weel ! I think we've had enough about it—leave it to me, and if I don't tirl at the pin for you, a'm not here ;” and upon this project the ultimatum depended.

The old man immediately went to Joe, to whom he mentioned the conclusion to which he and William had come.

“ As for him,” said he, “ I see clearly, the poor lad's no' fit for a wife. We must first try and get this nonsense out of him. But how to do that's the difficulty. Troth a'm of opinion, that a good sharp dose of active medicine o' some kind, would be as good as anything else, if not the best ; or if we could get him to take a good shower-bath every mornin', or set him to winding pirns ; or if the Lord wad send him a smart skelp o' rheumatism—any one o' them might do mair than all our reasoning. Poor boy, at all events, he is to be pitied.”

Joe knew not exactly what to say. He felt considerable anxiety about the effect which the disappointment might have upon his poor brother's health, or, perhaps, on his intellect, arguing from what he had already seen. As it was, he agreed to the project of making a second attempt in due and decent time. And thus matters rested among them for the present.

Maria's mother had thought deeply and anxiously of her daughter, and the danger to which she was exposed from young Clinton, who was so handsome in person and so popular in reputation. She entertained little doubt besides that the simple girl had suffered herself to entertain an affection for him—a fact which was evident from her manner, when spoken to on the subject. She felt now, that the most prudent course would be, to remove her to a distance, and place her at once beyond his reach. How to accomplish this, however, she did not know. In the mean time she waited with anxiety for the expected visit of Mrs. Clinton, on whose good sense and good feeling she placed much reliance. Both were interested in the dangerous position in which those two young

persons were placed, but she felt that she herself, and her child, had to dread both disgrace and ruin, should Clinton's designs be accomplished. On him the infamy of the crime would fall but slightly—in fact it would be a matter to boast of among his brother officers, and would be considered rather in the light of a triumph than an act of villany ; for such are the morals and the notions of the profligate.

At length the day appointed by Mrs. Clinton arrived, and that lady was punctual to her promise. After a little chat she entered upon the subject without either delay or circumlocution.

"Mrs. Brindsley," said she, "I have thought much of the subject we were talking of since I was here last ; and I now wish to know whether you are willing to part with your daughter for a time ?"

"I am anxious to place her beyond the reach of danger," replied her mother, "but I don't know how it is to be done."

"It can be done without any difficulty," said Mrs. Clinton, "and the removal, I can assure you, will be not only for her safety, but every way for her advantage. There is a most respect-

able dress-making establishment in the town of Armagh, the proprietress of which has been working for me and my family these many years. I have written to her since I saw you, and proposed to her that she should take your daughter for a time, in order that she should receive a competent knowledge of her business in its highest branches. To oblige me, she has consented to this, and your daughter is to live in her own house, and under her guardianship and protection. This must be every way most gratifying to you, as it will be advantageous to the young woman herself, and I certainly cannot anticipate any possible objection on your part."

"It will be a severe task to me to part with her," replied Mrs. Brindsley, "still, for my child's own sake, I feel that I ought to do it. But do you think, ma'am, that there's no danger in such a large town as Armagh?"

"Why, as for that matter," replied Mrs. Clinton, "you know there is danger everywhere abroad as well as at home. In Armagh, however, she will not be so conspicuous as she is here. There is no place where a person can be

so completely alone, or so little liable to observation, as in a great city. In that town she will lead a quiet and unobtrusive life, and will consequently escape notice and observation. Under those circumstances, I think, then, that you should consider this proposal as a welcome one. You ought to reflect, besides, that she will have an opportunity of improving herself in her business, and most likely of ultimately advancing herself in life."

"Indeed, ma'am," replied Mrs. Brindsley, "to own the truth, I am so far from having any objection to your kind proposal, that I am very glad to comply with it. My *only* objection is what I have just stated—my sorrow at parting with her; for, after all, it is a trying thing to a mother's heart, to let her only child go from under her own eye, and among strangers, who will not treat her with the tenderness and affection that she received at home."

"But you know, Mrs. Brindsley, that we cannot have every thing after our own wish. You ought to reflect that she will not be more than a short day's journey from you, and that under any circumstances, it would be



your duty to pursue the very plan which I have proposed."

"I am deeply grateful to you, ma'am, for the interest you take in my child, and I will be guided altogether by your advice," replied Mrs. Brindsley.

"Well, then," said the kind lady, "I think the less time you lose in following it up the better. Miss Travers has written to say, that she is ready to receive her at any time she may find it convenient to go. How soon could you send her?"

"Why, she will require some little things in the shape of a little outfit," replied her mother, "for you know, ma'am, I must send the poor child in a condition that she need not be ashamed of. I think in about a week's time I will have her ready."

"There is one thing I would beg to impress upon you," observed Mrs. Clinton, "and it is this—keep the place of her residence as much a secret as you can. The fewer that you make acquainted with it the better, both for her own sake and yours."

"I certainly cannot keep it a secret," said

her mother ; “ in that, ma’am, I must act contrary to your wishes. What would the neighbours say, if they found that I hurried her off secretly, and concealed her place of residence from them ? Anything like mystery might be the ruin of her character, and for that reason I will have nothing of the kind.”

“ Well,” replied Mrs. Clinton, “ I believe you are right ; still, from what I have learned of the modest and prudent conduct of your daughter, I don’t think you might apprehend any misinterpretations on the part of those who know her, even if you should conceal her place of residence ; but, lest an ungenerous suspicion of any kind might arise from it, I am of opinion, that it is more prudent to have no appearance of mystery in the affair whatsoever. Here is a letter which will be both an introduction and a recommendation to her. It is addressed to Miss Travers—the person who keeps the dress-making establishment to which I have alluded. And now, Mrs. Brindsley, if you will be guided by my advice, you will lose no time in sending her to the very eligible situation I have provided for her.”

Mrs. Brindsley thanked her gratefully for the kind and friendly interest she had taken in her daughter's welfare, after which that lady took her departure.

Six days had now elapsed since Mrs. Clinton's last visit, and on the morrow poor Maria was to be separated from her mother for the first time in her life. The fact of her intended departure had become pretty generally known throughout the neighbourhood, and among the other families whom it had reached, was that of our Presbyterian friend, old Sam Wallace. The moment Sam had heard it, he felt there was no time to be lost, and his anxiety to bring matters to a successful issue was increased by the incomprehensible conduct of his son. This simple-hearted young man was every day in the habit of exhibiting such ludicrous freaks of fancy, as afforded much amusement to those who were ignorant of the state of his feelings, and his motives, but which, nevertheless, filled the minds of his own friends with serious apprehensions for his sanity. One day, as his brother passed his room, he paused to listen to one of those wild soliloquies to which he was in the habit of

unconsciously treating them, and was rewarded by a very correct and somewhat declamatory enunciation of the following medley :—

“ It is too true,” said he, “ What my father calls, ‘ the mark of the minister ’ is upon me. I am debarred the privileges—the delicious privileges of other men, and as I have, after a great deal of struggle, resolved to plead my own cause in person, I feel that my hands are manacled by ecclesiastical regulations, otherwise I might have been guided by my father’s advice—to kiss her occasionally during the dialogue, a fearful attempt, but certainly pleasant in the operation. Yet I saw our own servant-man, Johnny Murray, kiss Biddy Brady, and she only ran after him, and beat him in a truly jocular spirit, upon which, so far from regretting his conduct, he only repeated the offence. That, however, was but an isolated case, and if I imitated it, heaven knows what a disastrous result it might occasion to my suit. Well, I do suppose that some young creature or other, say one in a hundred thousand, *might* wish to be kissed ; but perhaps, I am doing the sex injustice, alas, I fear I am ; let me say then, one in half-a-million.

See, however, in this case, how the chances are against me, if I should follow my father's counsel—and yet, we are commanded to obey our parents. At all events, I shall make an effort to speak to her face to face, although it is an awful attempt. Well, if I fail I shall become a missionary, and try the East, or, perhaps, Madagascar in Africa."

Joe lost no time in repeating the substance of this rhapsody to his father, who shook his head with serious alarm, and observed, in that satirical spirit in which he usually indulged :

"A'm 'feart, Joe, that the silly lad is nearly beside himself, an' that if we canna get the lassie to marry him, it's likely to set him clean daft. Wouh, man, but that wad be a curious case—a man runnin' into matrimony to set his wits right, when we know that for one it cures, it dings the brains out of a hunder. Even sae—we must run the risk for the sake of the poor minister. What the de'il will become of him, though, if she leaves the neighbourhood, and they say she's going to Armagh on the day after the morrow. In that case, there's no time to

be lost, and I think I had better put on me, and try our luck."

He accordingly dressed himself in his blue broad-cloth coat, yellow waistcoat, drab cassimere small clothes, and leggings of the same cloth, and set out a wooing for his half-crazed son.

On reaching Mrs. Brindsley's cottage, he "tirmed at the pin," as he termed it—that is to say, raised the latch, and presented himself to that good woman.

"Weel, gudewife—a-hem—that is, Mrs. Brindsley—how is a' wi' you the day? And how is your bonnie and winsome lassie, that's turning half the heads o' the parish?"

"Why, indeed, Mr. Wallace, we're all quite well, I thank you. As for poor Maria, she has turned nobody's head yet I hope."

"Saul, and its too late for you to hope for that, Mrs. Brindsley; one head she has turned topsilturie, and a clear, sensible, well-informed head it was until he laid eyes upon her. Am making allusion to my son, the minister, that his brother Joe was talking to you about. It's a very pitiable case, Mrs. Brindsley; he's very

nearly clean daft about her ; an' troth am not surprised at it, for to tell the blessed truth she's beyond any thing in the shape o' woman I ever saw—unless it be my Mattie, when she was about your wean's age. Mattie, I believe, had the advantage of her in the mouse mark on the nose, and that coaxin' cast in the eye. Indeed it was that won me, for we never met, but I thought that eye was fixed upon me, especially at meeting, although she often told me since—for she does like to joke about it—that it was not upon me, but the minister it was set ; he was a bachelor at the time, just as my son, the minister, is now ; but he had little to support a matrimonial compact, barring an oily tongue, and Mattie, after all, had a relish for the shiners, and has to the present day, dacent woman."

"But I thought I explained myself upon the subject of your son's proposal, in the conversation I had with Mr. Joe."

"Hoot awa, woman ! what signifies that ? Sure you know well enough that young creatures, like your daughter, don't know their ain mind during the twenty-four hours o' the day..

Think o' the advantage of this match to your girl—a minister's wife—and a minister that's no dependin on his stipend, but will inherit the half of what am worth ; for, as to my property, a'll divide it half and half between my sons."

"I'll be very candid with you, Mr. Wallace, replied this sensible woman ; " I feel very deeply what an advantage such a match as you propose would be to my daughter ; and you may believe me, that I left no argument that I could think of untried, to bring her over to accept the offer that your family were kind enough to make her. She is herself very thankful for it ; and I assure you that she respects your son the minister very much ; and I am aware that if she was disposed to marry at all, she knows none she would prefer to him. She will not marry, however, at present ; and when I tell you that she has refused several offers, young as she is, I am sure you will not feel offended at the resolution she has come to. I have done every thing that a mother could, to prevail on her to marry your son ; but I failed, and you know I could not think of forcing her inclinations."

" Lord ! what strange cattle these foolish las-



sies are. They dinna know what's good for them, when it comes in their way. There's the minister I spoke o' was making up to my Mattie, and a paukie lad he was ; he thought to take to psalm singing wi' her, and invited himself to her father's to take tea, and went through a' the jinks and whigmaleeries o' courtship ; but Mattie's father, a douce sponsible man wi' a long bag o' siller for her tocher, showed to her the advantage of marrying a man that had plenty o' the world's comfort for her ; and weel behoves the sensible girl, she flung the empty-pouched minister aside, and took a strong affection for myself. Things are changed now though. The young women o' the present day take to novel reading, and nothing will go down now wi' them but a thing they call sentiment, or some nonsense stuff o' that kind. Now give me sense—strong sterling sense—such as Mattie had, instead of novels and sentiment."

"I assure you, Mr. Wallace, that my daughter never read a novel in her life. The truth is, she thinks herself too young to marry."

"What age is she now? but sure I needn't ask; she's nothing but what I call her—a mere wean."

“She’s within a few months of seventeen.”

“Weel ! my Mattie was a trifle beyont that, she had got up to No. 3, wi’ a cipher after it ; and am no sayin that if it were na for the state yon unfortunate minister is in about her, and that I’d be anxious for his own sake to see her his wife, that No. 3, wi’ the nought at its tail, is a good sensible age for a woman to marry at. You think there’s no hope then.”

“Not the slightest, Mr. Wallace ; and I assure you, I am sorry for it, both for the girl’s own sake and your’s. I am certain she never will again get such an offer.”

“Weel, ma’am, we’ve done our duty. We must only send him on his travels. He had once an intention of becoming a missionary ; but as we didna like to part wi’ him, we put him off the notion o’t. However, he told his brother Joe the other day that if he failed here he’d try his hand among some o’ the Pagan Islands abroad.”

“I hope God will preserve and prosper him wherever he goes,” replied Mrs. Brindsley ; “I can never cease to respect him and his family for the honour they intended my humble child.”

“ Well, ma’am, we’ve done our best ; when things are come to the worst they maun mend. I’ll be wishing you good day, Mrs. Brindsley ; and if the young woman should change her mind, you know where to find us.”

It is scarcely necessary to say, that Mrs. Brindsley felt excessively mortified, if not afflicted, at the obstinacy which could prompt her daughter to reject such an advantageous match ; and it occasioned her the more anxiety, as she feared that Maria’s motive in declining it, arose from what she suspected to be, a secret attachment to young Clinton. She now felt anxious to have her removed from the neighbourhood, especially as the young officer had got a second month’s leave of absence. On this point, however, she had not much to fear. The next day was that appointed for her journey to Armagh. A public car passed every day through the village where she lived, to that ancient city, and she employed the remainder of that day in making preparations for this first change in her daughter’s position in the world.

On the next morning, that of her departure, her mother said to her,

"My dear Maria, I have been thinking of that bit of paper which Stuart the spaeman sealed up ; it can signify very little either one way or the other ; for what can a poor deaf and dumb man, like him, know of our future fortunes ? I think, then, as you are going into the world, that it might be both proper and necessary to let you know the contents of it. I will open it."

"Don't, for your life, my dear mother," replied Maria; "you know he wrote on the other paper that the knowledge of it might be my ruin. I feel no wish—no curiosity to know it ; and with my consent it never will be opened, until the day of my marriage. If my life passes without any likelihood of being married, then indeed it will be a different matter; but at present I beg of you not to open it."

"Very well, my dear," replied Mrs. Brindsley, "as it was principally on your account that I wished to do so, and as you refuse to consent to it, I will put it past unopened."

We will not dwell upon the scene of their separation the next morning, but we may briefly recapitulate the excellent advice which her mo-

ther, with tears of bitter sorrow flowing down her cheeks, bestowed on her ere she went.

“Now, my darling child,” said she, “you are going into a strange situation in the world—in a large town where there is much vice and wickedness, and where, no doubt, in consequence of your extraordinary beauty, you will be beset with many snares and temptations that you may find it difficult to resist. Remember this, however, that if you depend upon your own strength you are lost. During your past life, ever since you had sense to think, you acted, as far as I could judge, under the influence of true religion. You never neglected your morning or evening prayers to God, your creator and protector, and never do, my darling Maria. Place yourself under the Providence of the Almighty—you have no father but him—and, believe me, he will be a father to you if you worship him in spirit and in truth. Avoid light company, and do not associate with any of your companions who are fond of improper amusements and pleasures. Attend your parish church regularly, and let your conduct be proper and modest, and such as will gain you the respect of all those

whose good opinions are worth anything. If they sneer at you for your sobriety of manner, meet it by cheerfulness and good humour, and if they call you a prude, laugh them, if you can, out of their prejudices, and leave them to their levity. Write to me often, as I will to you; and now, may the blessing of God go with you and protect you—as it will if you seek it and deserve it.”

A long, affectionate, and tearful embrace then succeeded—for the public car stopped at the door, and Maria, still steeped in tears, took her place upon it. The car then drove off, and her bereaved mother went in to her childless hearth, where she wept bitterly. Maria, on her way, caught a view of the parish church, which she had ever been in the habit of attending. As she did, her eyes filled with tears, which she gently wiped away. May we ask why she did shed them on looking on that parish church, or whether the associations which it excited were strictly in accordance with religion or not? but, perhaps, the reader will become acquainted with all this in due time.

## CHAPTER IV.

MARIA ENTERS UPON LIFE—MISS TRAVERS, HER CHARACTER  
AND ESTABLISHMENT.

THIS was the first occasion on which Maria had ever travelled beyond the bounds of her native parish, the scenery of which was very beautiful. That she felt that separation from her mother with the most profound emotions of sorrow, need scarcely be asserted. That mother had loved and cherished her from infancy, with a tenderness and a brooding care, that could never be surpassed by any emanation of affection that ever proceeded from the heart of woman. All those delightful emotions of various attachments that are divided and spent upon several objects, were gathered together and concentrated upon her. To her the girl was life, love, and an impersonation of all that could be dear to her in this world—her hope, her pride, and her consolation. Maria's attachment, on the other hand, was worthy of such love. That mother was to

her a friend that embodied all the dearest relations of life, and a companion, beyond whose society her affectionate heart never wished to pass. No wonder, then, that each felt so bitterly on the occasion of this their first separation. Maria, however, was young, and her imagination vivid. The first thing that checked her grief and diverted her heart from the object of her thoughts, was the novelty of the impressions made upon it by the striking beauty of the scenery through which she passed. Those impressions were fresh and new, and filled her with sensations of pure and delightful enjoyment. The contemplation of all the varied imagery of the country, as she went along from one beautiful residence and piece of scenery to another, kept her thoughts in a perpetual play of novelty and pleasure. This, in her case, is not to be wondered at, for the girl, though unconscious of it, possessed a natural love and relish for the beautiful in all its various aspects. It was, in fact, the poetry of youth, expanding itself upon the charms of the scenery by which she was surrounded. This, we say, for a time superseded her sorrow, but only for a time, for



ever and anon the recollection of her mother and of their separation, would return, and immediately the quick sob and sudden tear were certain to follow. Labouring under those alternations of feeling, she at length reached Armagh, where, having engaged a boy to carry her trunk, she found out the residence of Miss Travers with very little trouble.

On arriving there, she gave a very timid single knock, and, after more than usual delay, was admitted into a rather narrow hall, where the boy placed her trunk, and then took his departure. A woman, somewhat under middle age, and about the middle size, had opened the door; but on looking at Maria, she started, paused, looked more attentively, and seemed to examine her with a degree of wonder which she could not disguise.

“Lord bless us!” she exclaimed, in tones that were inaudible to Maria, “who can this be?”

Maria, however, lost no time in presenting Mrs. Clinton’s letter. “This, said she, “is, I believe, where Miss Travers lives?”

“It is, indeed, Miss.”



"Would you be kind enough to give her this letter, and say that the person who brought it is here?"

"Deil a foot a'll go anywhere till I get you a seat in the parlour first. Come in this way;" and she immediately placed a chair for her. "Haith, a couldn't allow the like o' you to stand in the hall anyway. Take a seat now and rest yourself, and a'll deliver your letter."

She went out to seek for Miss Travers, whom she found in her own bed-room, taking some materials for dress out of a large oak press. She knocked at the door, and asked, in a somewhat loud voice :

"Ir ye there, mistress?"

"Yes, Becky; what do you want?"

"Want, mistress! why deil asich a creature ever dropped from heaven, as there's in the parlour below."

"What do you mean, Becky? Did I not often desire you never to go barefooted after breakfast? Advice, however, is lost upon you; the moment you leave me, go and put on clean shoes and stockings, and don't let any respectable person see you in that trim. You're a disgrace, in

your nasty bare feet and legs, to any respectable establishment. Who is below stairs?"

"A don't know—a can't say; but, in truth, a think she must be a stray angel, and deil a thing else. Do hurry down and see her, mistress."

"Why, Beck, who is she? or what is she? Is she a lady? You foolish woman. She's probably some customer. Does she wish to see me? but I need not ask. What's that in your hand? Is it a letter?"

"Goodness have a guide of us, am the most lightheaded flipe alive. Yes, mistress, it's a letter she bid me give you."

Miss Travers took the letter, looked narrowly at the seal, for Mrs. Clinton had impressed it with the family arms; but being by no means skilled in the mysteries of heraldry, Miss Travers failed to decipher either the motto or the crest, and, consequently, to trace the writer without referring to the inside, which she immediately did, and soon made herself acquainted with its contents. In the meantime, Becky, whose curiosity was excited to the highest pitch, had kept her ground until the communication

was read, and the seal once more inspected. When she said : " Goodness me, who is she, mistress ? "

" Begone, Beck," replied Miss Travers, indignantly—" begone, I say ; get on your shoes and stockings ; and don't dare to put impertinent questions to me. I will not bear such liberties ; begone, I say ; and tell the young woman I shall come down to her in a few minutes."

" Well, only wait till you see her, mistress ; and then if you blame me for wishing to know who she is, I'll forgive you, that's all a say." And having said so, she went down to deliver the message.

Miss Travers was prepared, by the letter she had just read, to find a very handsome young woman below stairs ; but certainly, on entering the parlour, where Maria was seated, who rose when she came in, she was every whit as much amazed as poor Becky, at the blaze of youth and beauty that flashed upon her. Maria's form, manner, and whole deportment, displayed those graces of easy and lady-like motion, which are so often inherited from the bountiful hand of nature herself. She was one of those girls on

whom the plainest dress becomes genteel and graceful ; but, on this occasion, she was really dressed rather above her station in life. The consequence was, that Miss Travers felt very nearly confounded by her whole appearance, and could scarcely undeceive herself so far as not to believe that a lady of much respectability actually stood before her. There is always associated, with the qualities we have enumerated, an ease and superiority of language, and an elevation of thought, in perfect keeping with personal accomplishments so rare and interesting ; a fact which every close observer of life must have frequently remarked.

Of Miss Travers, who is to be one of the *dramatis personæ* in our truthful tale, we feel it necessary to give our readers some information, both as to her person, general character, and antecedents. She was, at the time of her *debut* here, about thirty-two or thirty-three, or "by'r lady," thirty-six years of age. She was tall ; and the plump fulness of youth was a by-gone recollection, and to herself by no means a pleasant one. In her personal appearance, she was decidedly equivocal. Whether she had been

handsome in her youth, nobody who had not seen her in her youth could tell. Whether she was handsome now or the reverse, Œdipus himself could not determine. Her countenance assumed so many phases of expression, that we can compare it to nothing with so much truth, as those dissolving views which are seen in public exhibitions, where, whilst one particular object, or class of objects, is distinctly exposed to us, lo ! a few moments, and another object, or class of objects, completely dissimilar, appears to our astonished sight. So was it with Miss Travers. At one time, you felt yourself on the point of pronouncing her rather handsome, when, in an instant, some change of position, or some feeling or sentiment that impressed itself on her features, conveyed such an expression as led you to the very opposite conclusion. She was tall in person, and, in certain attitudes, appeared not deficient in something like grace ; but immediately, on unconsciously assuming another posture, every trace of harmony or proportion in her outline disappeared, and she seemed, to a painful degree, both stiff and angular. So, in truth, was it with her disposition and temper.

On some occasions she was placid, amiable, and generous, whilst on others, she exhibited the penury of the miser, and the ferocity of the tigress. Her control over her workwomen and apprentices was, consequently, very uncertain ; but on the whole, the spirit which prevailed was the domineering. To this there was one exception, in the person of a journeywoman named Betty M'Clean, who had gained such an ascendancy over her that, although they fought three or four battles every week, yet Betty never failed to put her down in every single encounter. If the heart of man is strange, what must not the heart of woman be ? Those two females, though leading a life of apparent hostility and riot, could scarcely live without each other. Betty M'Clean's advice in everything connected with the house and business, was uniformly final and triumphant ; and in no case was there anything of importance done without it. Yet she and her mistress fought like cats, or devils, almost every day. As to Miss Travers, there is one fact which ought to be recorded to her immortal honour. When she had an aged mother, a still more helpless father, and

a family of brothers and sisters, to maintain by her skill and labour, she devoted all her energies to their support, and never rested until she saw the latter respectably settled in life, and her two aged parents placed in their last bed, under a decent tombstone, raised to their memory at her own expense. In addition to all this, there was, considerably far in the distance, an *ideal*—which ideal consisted of the *eidolon*, of what Miss Travers uniformly termed, in its highest and most respectable professional sense, “an officer of excise;” but in the usual *parlance*, a common gauger. This worthy gauger, whose name was Thady M’Scent, had, according to Miss Travers’s version of the circumstances, suffered in the several items of agony, disappointment, complaint of the heart, despair, delirium tremens—which was hereditary in the family—and an incessant thirst of so peculiar a character, that it could not, under any possible circumstances, be assuaged by any quantity of mere water. If those were not sufficiently strong proofs of his attachment for her, it would be difficult to conjecture what could. In their last interview she had given him a conditional



refusal of so decided a bearing, that he went out that night, in a state of despair, to seize a still, and was relieved from all his sorrows by a shot from one of the illicit distillers, who sent the unfortunate lover home with his heels foremost. It was out of regard to his memory that any time Miss Travers ever took a glass of punch, which was only every day after dinner, she always made it a point of conscience and undying affection to prefer the pure poteen.

We have already said, that Miss Travers was literally confounded by the extraordinary beauty and lady-like elegance of Maria Brindsley. This was fact. On entering the parlour she started, just as Becky had done ; and when Maria rose, she said :

“ Pray be seated, Miss Brindsley. I hope you had an agreeable journey.”

“ I have never before been separated from my mother, ma'am,” replied Maria, “ and the thought of that separation was and is very painful to me ; otherwise the journey was a pleasant one, and the country as we came along delightful. At least I thought it so ; but that might be, perhaps, because it was new to me.”

“Well, perhaps so, too, Miss Brindsley, and I have no doubt but it was. Mrs. Clinton speaks very highly of you, as she does, indeed, of every thing and every body, on which account her good opinion is worth cultivating. I am sure, Miss Brindsley,” she proceeded, “that, from your great beauty, you must have had a rare number of admirers ; and, I suppose, considerable practice at dressmaking ?”

Maria, who felt the close combination of those two interrogatories rather puzzling, only blushed ; but after a little replied to the last question, which Miss Travers, however, applied to the first.

“Only in a plain way, ma’am.”

“Well, my dear, even so ; plainness in love or courtship, is a valuable principle. I remember, at least, *one* beautiful instance of it ; but, alas ! Miss Brindsley, it is only now a recollection—a mere dream.”

“But I spoke only of dressmaking, ma’am,” said Maria. “My mother made up plain dresses for the country people, and I assisted her to the best of my humble ability. If you expect much then from me, Miss Travers, I fear you will be

sadly disappointed. All that my mother knew of the business, proceeded from natural taste and cleverness, for she was never taught."

"Well, my dear, it sometimes happens that ignorance is superior to education, and in that case it requires a person to be indifferent to both to form an impartial opinion."

Poor Maria could make no reply whatsoever to such an inscrutable aphorism as this, and she accordingly remained silent.

"Have you ever been in Armagh before?" asked Miss Travers.

"Never, ma'am," replied Maria; "nor have I ever been beyond the bounds of my native parish until this day."

"In the course of the evening then, I shall bring you out to see our town, or rather our city. They tell me it was built by St. Patrick, who was the first king of it, and killed Brian Boroo with his own hand, at the battle of Bannockburn. There's a nephew of mine, a young medical student, who gives me much information upon those curious old subjects when he is at home, and happens to spend an evening with me. He says it was called the Battle of Ban-

nockburn because St. Patrick made the field of battle so hot upon Brian Boroo and his soldiers, that the scones or bannocks which they had slung in bags at their backs were all burned, so that a great many of his men, who died in the field, were slain by starvation. You are hungry, of course, after your journey ; but we will have a check (lunch) together, and after that I will show you the city. The same city is considered the handsomest inland town in Ireland :”—a compliment, by the way, which Armagh well deserves.

She accordingly rang the bell, and having ordered up substantial refreshments, she proceeded to put a few more questions to Maria.

“What family has your mother, Miss Brindley ?”

“None but myself, ma’am.”

“Your father is dead, Mrs. Clinton tells me ; do you remember him ?”

“He died abroad, ma’am, either about the time when I was born or soon after it. He never saw me. I had also a brother and sister, but they died early, almost when children, so that I am all that was left to comfort my dear

and affectionate mother, who is a lonely woman this day—lonely and childless, I may say,” and here her eyes filled with tears.

“ No, no, my dear, not childless ; but there is one thing, indeed two, that I must press upon you ; don’t fret, you are well, and your mother is well ; and don’t take too much sugar or milk in your tea, or it will quite spoil your complexion. Indeed, it is well known that nothing does it so much as fretting. In general, I believe, nobody with a good complexion ever gives way to fretting, because it sustains the spirits, and keeps a healthy colour in the cheeks.”

The poor girl was puzzled again, and could only reply somewhat in the equivocal language uttered by the dressmaker.

“ Indeed, I believe you are right, ma’am.”

Miss Travers then took out the letter, and having once more cast her eye on it, she said, as she folded it up and put it in her pocket :

“ By the way, Miss Brindsley, your kind patroness says here that you have already had several offers of marriage, and all highly advantageous, yet that you refused them. How is that?”

"Why," replied Maria, "I really can't tell. I believe I am good-looking, at least they tell me so, and I suppose they took a fancy to me. As for myself, I have no inclination to marriage at present, and that is simply the reason why I refused them."

"Take care, Miss Brindsley," returned the dressmaker, smiling, and significantly shaking her forefinger at her, "take care, now ; perhaps the favourite individual for whom *you* took a fancy did not offer. May I ask, now, whether you could conscientiously say, that you are heart-free this moment ?"

Whatever Maria might think of the question, whether impertinent and unjustifiable or not, in a person who was a perfect stranger to her, and had no right to put it—all we can say is, that she blushed deeply, and hesitated for a few moments, after which she replied :

"I assure you, Miss Travers, I have seen no person yet whom I could think of accepting as my husband."

"Well, my dear, I admit that your reply is very candid ; but as for me, I am not an enemy to love in a young woman, provided she restrains

it within due limits. It is, I think, a healthy passion, prevents the appetite from becoming exuberant, and keeps the mind agreeably engaged, whilst the hands are at work. I know this from experience, nor will I deny, Miss Brindsley, that I loved and was beloved ; but, alas, there is a doom in those things. I was told long ago by a spaeman—he was one of the Stuart family, who never foretold any thing that did not come out true—that I should not be married until near thirty—and I assure you that I have a proposal of marriage before me at this present time. This, however, is a secret, and I beg you will not mention it until I permit you.”

Maria started at a case which she considered somewhat analogous to her own, leaving the point of time out of the question, but made no reply, except to assure Miss Travers that she would preserve her secret.

Whilst this characteristic dialogue was proceeding in the parlour, Becky, the servant, carried the tidings of Maria's beauty to the work-room, where her arrival, and the object of it, were soon understood. Miss Travers had men-

tioned to them, that she expected an interesting young person from a distant part of the country, who had been recommended to her by a lady of the highest respectability. The account of her extraordinary beauty, however, had set them on the *qui vive*, and nothing could surpass their eagerness to ascertain with their own eyes, the interesting fact, whether she was such a paragon as Becky had represented her.

When snack or lunch was over—or we should rather say dinner, for in fact it was made such—Miss Travers desired Becky to bring down her shawl, as she was going, she said, to show the town to Miss Brindsley.

“And, Becky,” said she, “tell the girls to dine by themselves to-day. Miss Brindsley and I have dined, but we will join them at tea.”

When they closed the hall door after them, on going out, the noise brought the work-women in a rush to the windows, to catch a glimpse of the great beauty, but alas, in vain. They could see nothing of the great beauty, but a rather tall, and very graceful and elegant figure, from which they insisted that Becky was a blockhead and a blunderer, and that the young lady they saw



walking with Miss Travers, could not be the poor journeywoman she had expected from the country.


We shall not dwell upon their stroll through this beautiful town at any length. Maria, who had never before been out of her native village, looked upon it with wonder, and thought there was no end to its immense size. She wondered how so many people could find means of living in it, and asked Miss Travers if Dublin was much larger ?

“ Why, my dear,” replied Miss Travers, “ you might almost steal it out of Dublin, without its being missed. I lived in Dublin, and conducted Miss Affleck’s establishment for many years, and I think I ought to know.”

It would be concealing the truth to say, that even this public appearance of Maria in the Armagh metropolis, did not occasion many persons to feel surprised by her beauty, and the exquisite symmetry and elegance of her person. Several individuals of both sexes, and of every age, stood to look after her, and not a few inquiries were made as to who the young female was who accompanied Miss Travers through the town.

In the course of the evening they joined the other girls at tea, and, truth to tell, their curiosity was gratified, but in a manner for which they were not prepared. This rustic Grace burst upon them like a vision of light; but then they witnessed such modesty, such unassuming pretensions, and such deference to them all, that they involuntarily treated her with a degree of respect, such as they had never manifested towards Miss Travers herself. Nor did that compound of incompatible qualities feel in the slightest degree offended at this. On the contrary, she felt quite proud of her, and whenever she addressed her, always made it a point to do so as *Miss Brindsley*. To have such a girl there, would, she concluded, give importance and *eclat* to her establishment, and for this reason, she determined to treat her with particular respect. The other girls were also delighted with the sweetness and amiability of her manners, as well as with her residence among them, and for reasons which will be quite sufficient, at least to our female readers. There was a *young lady*—for so she insisted on being called—from Dublin, the forewoman of the estab-

ishment, who was, to say the truth, very clever and very handsome. She was vain of her beauty, and of her superiority in a knowledge of her trade over the others, whom she treated on all occasions with ill temper, and the most undisguised contempt. In fact she was vindictive, jealous of any want of respect, proud and coquettish to absurdity, whenever she had an opportunity of being so. Her fine eye was brilliant, no doubt, but there was a sparkle of malignant fire in it, which, when lit up in her moods of ill-temper, deprived her otherwise fine face of half its beauty. It is unnecessary to say that she was no favourite with her companions, who were now delighted at the presence of a rival among them, who surpassed her so far in those personal attractions, for the possession of which she had given herself such offensive and insolent airs. There was, therefore, a complacency and satisfied sense of triumph in their conduct and bearing towards Maria, which mortified the young lady from Dublin to the heart. She never spoke to Maria during the whole evening, but she contrived to bestow upon her certain glances which betokened any thing but



good will, whilst every glance was accompanied by a visible sneer of contempt, which she was by no means anxious to conceal.

The next day, one, at least, of the tasks of life began. She commenced to labour, but she felt it not as such. This sensible and excellent girl understood her duty too well to repine at *that*. The only cause of anxiety she had was her separation from her mother, and this reflection kept her spirits in a depressed state for a considerable time, although we are bound to say, in justice to her kind-hearted companions, that she received at their hands every mark of respect and good will. With a fine natural intellect, and surprising aptitude at acquiring and retaining information upon every matter connected with her business, it need scarcely be said, that she made a rapid and extraordinary progress, although we must say, that Miss Bennet, the young lady from Dublin, omitted no opportunity of throwing every obstacle in her way. On some occasions she went so far as to give her wrong instructions, in order to lead her into discreditable mistakes ; but such was the quick and perceptive spirit of her young

rival, that she detected at once the snares that had been set for her, and consequently succeeded in avoiding them.

As it was, her life here for a time was any thing but disagreeable. Betty M'Clean, herself a first-rate workwoman, became her staunch friend and supporter in the establishment ; nor did this fact occasion any diminution in Miss Travers's good will towards her. Betty, who saw the envious spirit by which Miss Bennet was animated, resolved in her own mind, not only to protect Maria from her ungenerous manœuvres, but to involve herself in one of the traps which she was in the habit of laying for her unoffending companion. This, it is true, was not easily done ; for as to Miss Bennet, though jealous and malicious, she was an admirable work-woman, clever, ready-witted, and prepared for a reply upon every emergency. Still, honest Betty kept her eye on her, and with what effect will be seen hereafter.

As time advanced, Maria began to regain her spirits, and exhibited a cheerfulness of disposition which was not at all affected. She had written several times to her mother, from whom

she received gratifying accounts. Many verbal messages, through the kindness of friends and neighbours from her native parish, who were in the habit of attending Armagh market, also reached her. In fact, she felt both comfortable, and we might almost say, happy. Her companions, however, could observe that there were short pauses in this apparent happiness, and that certain periods of depression were in the habit of recurring, and exercising such an influence over her as no effort of hers could conceal. They found that she indulged in those principally when alone, where they have sometimes caught her actually in tears. Even in their own society, after indulging in cheerful, if not in mirthful intercourse, they have often known her to withdraw suddenly from the light-hearted spirit of the conversation, and to sigh deeply, but in such a manner, that she appeared to be altogether unconscious of it. To be sure they had their surmises and their theories on the subject, and of course the natural conclusion they arrived at was, that the beautiful Maria Brindsley was, after all, actually in love.

Under such circumstances three months had

elapsed, during which period Maria's conduct was a model for modesty and propriety to every young woman in her station of life. She attended church regularly, and returned home without joining her companions in their walks, which they usually took after service. Even Miss Travers thought that she secluded herself too much, and she told her so. Maria, however, only smiled, and said she had no wish to act otherwise than as she did; upon which Miss Travers left her to pursue her own inclinations.

This tale is an authentic history of an individual, and by the necessity which compels us to keep both herself and the course of her life, strange and varied as it was, constantly before our readers, we are prevented from breaking in upon it, either by collateral or adventitious incidents. From this resolution we shall depart, only when their introduction may be necessary to illustrate the progress of her destiny towards its ultimate and fixed position. She had then already become the common topic of conversation among the young men of Armagh, and especially among the officers then quartered in its barracks. Nothing, however, detrimental to her

moral character, was ever breathed against her. The thing, in fact, was impossible. Her prudence, her modesty, and the general propriety of her conduct, defended her as with a shield ; but the wonder was among the rakes and profligates, both civil and military, why a creature so beautiful as she was, should appear to be so unconscious of that beauty, and hold herself so completely aloof from those who might otherwise have had some opportunity of addressing her, or of gaining a footing of intimacy with her.

About five months had now elapsed, and Maria, with the exception of Miss Bennet, was, in point of elegant workmanship (if we may be allowed to use the expression) and skill, nearly at the head of the establishment, and Miss Bennet was beginning to tremble for her laurels as a dressmaker—the laurels on any other account having been demolished ever since Maria's residence among them. We need scarcely mention to our readers, that where a set of young, unmarried women are brought together, by any kind of employment that keeps their hands busy, and leaves their tongues at liberty, there will be many and extensive discussions upon indivi-



duals of the other sex. This is equally true as respects either country or town ; for human nature is the same, whether at a spinning match in a rural village, or a coterie of fashionable ladies in a *boudoir*. They will discuss the personal qualities and accomplishments of the opposite sex with as much interest in the one as in the other. So it is, and so it will be to the end of the world.

One day about this period, the workwomen began to banter each other about their respective lovers, and as the love secrets of such a class are pretty generally known, it happened that the raillery was rather extensive among them. Maria, who never refused to sustain her part in their usual conversations, was silent upon this occasion, simply because she had nothing to contribute to the common topic.

"It's well for Miss Brindsley," said one of them, "that she hasn't seen this handsome young officer, that has been quartered with his regiment the other day in the barracks here. I'll engage she won't have her heart long after seeing him. The whole town's talking about him."

"Oh ! I know who you mean," said Miss

Travers, who happened to be present—"Lieutenant Clinton. Miss Brindsley, of course, has seen him often, as he is from the same parish with herself. It was his mother that recommended her to me, in the highest terms, too, I must certainly say. He was quartered in Kilkenney before he came here, and he certainly is one of the handsomest young officers I ever saw. You must have seen him, of course, Miss Brindsley?"

Maria's tell-tale face became crimson, a fact which was not unobserved by those about her, especially by the keen and malignant eye of Miss Bennet.

"Whether she has seen him or not," observed that lady, "the mention of his name has put her to the blush at any rate; and it is said that young ladies do not blush for nothing."

"Whisht! Miss Bennet," said Betty M'Clean, "the less *you* say about blushing the better, feth. We all know that your blushing days are over."

Miss Bennet tossed her head in high disdain, and gave Betty a glance that intimated any thing but a gospel spirit.

"I never pay attention," she replied, "to vulgar impertinence ; thank goodness, I'm above that."

"That's bekaise you have too much of your own to regulate," said Betty, returning her a look quite as fiery as hers. "To blush ! where the de'il could a blush find a settlement upon so hard a face as yours ? Troth, a'd as soon expect a blush from a smith's anvil."

"Silence, Betty !" said Miss Travers, "I'll hear no such language to Miss Bennet."

"Let Miss Bennet keep a civil tongue in her head, then. Why does she do every thing in her power to annoy and provoke Miss Brindsley, that offends no one, and least of all her ; but de'il a one o' me will stand it. While a'm here a'll protect Miss Brindsley from her impertinent insults."

"But in the mean time, Betty, you haven't given Miss Brindsley time to answer my question," said the mistress of the establishment, assuming as much temper and dignity as she could muster. "Have you ever seen Lieutenant Clinton, Maria ?"

"Yes, ma'am, frequently," replied Maria. "Their family and ours attend the same church."

"*Their* family and *yours!*" exclaimed Miss Bennet, with a stare, which ended in a contemptuous giggle.

"Yes," replied Maria, whose face now blushed with strong indignation; "*their* family and *ours*. I hope you understand the words, Miss Bennet. Our ancestors, until a very recent period, were quite as respectable as theirs."

"I should prefer better authority for that fact than your own word," replied the vindictive forewoman.

"Your opinion upon the subject," retorted Maria, "is to me so utterly indifferent and worthless, that if I had the strongest authority in existence, I would not take the trouble of producing it to you. I have borne much unprovoked offence and insult from you, Miss Bennet, I may say, from the first day I entered under this roof; but patience has its limits, and I now assure you that I will bear no more. You must treat me with civility, or otherwise expect to be treated by the same incivility which you may offer to me; self-defence and self-respect will force me to it, however much against my will."

Miss Bennet had imagined, from the quiet and unassuming manner of Maria, that she was a poor timid creature, without either spirit or independence; but when she felt the lightning glance which shot from her eyes, as she uttered the last words, she saw clearly that she had mistaken her antagonist altogether, and miscalculated her disposition. On this occasion she made no reply, but began to hum an air to herself, and proceeded with her work. Miss Travers was glad to see this little breeze lulled, and took that opportunity of making further inquiries from Maria of the handsome lieutenant.

“What kind of a character does he bear in his native parish, Miss Brindsley?” she asked.

“He bears an admirable character,” replied Maria, her cheeks mantling, and her eye sparkling, as she fixed it upon her opponent with a look of pride and resolution : “he was and is a general favourite with both rich and poor; and as far as ever I could learn, deservedly so.”

“Do you know him personally, Miss Brindsley?” asked Miss Travers, with something of

a significant look ; “ I mean, is there any acquaintance between him and you ? ”

“ None whatever, ma’am ; I simply know his person ; but we are utterly unacquainted, and never spoke. I wonder, however, how you could imagine, Miss Travers, that a girl in my humble condition of life, could be acquainted with a person of his rank. I think you ought to know that it would be neither possible nor proper.”

“ Well, my dear, you at all events have defended him well.”

“ I have *not* defended him,” replied Maria, with a sparkling eye, “ because he does not stand in need of defence ; and if he did, I would defend him, and do justice to the absent. I have only repeated the opinion which is abroad of him in his native place, where he is best known ; and if he was the humblest man in existence, I would do the same, provided he deserved it.”

“ Well said, Miss Brindsley,” exclaimed Betty M‘Clean ; “ de’il a one of ye but’s a right girl ; but wait,” she added, looking askance at Miss Travers, “ wait till you fall in love wi’ a

gauger, or rather wait till a gauger falls in love wi' you. What's an officer of the army till a keg-hunter?"

This hit honest Betty added, because she thought Miss Travers had catechised Maria too severely and with some apparent suspicion, upon the subject of young Clinton.

"Did you ever hear, Miss Brindsley," she proceeded, "whether Captain Clinton drinks or not?"

"Betty," said Miss Travers, "you are getting impertinent, and if you continue it, I shall order you out of the room."

"Ay, but de'il a foot a'll go in the meantime; am able to stand my ground any day."

"How dare you attempt to throw ridicule upon the memory of a gentleman?" said Miss Travers, with a face of flame. "How dare you wound my feelings in the tenderest point, especially when you know the mutual affection which he entertained for me?"

"Deil's cure to you then, what business had you to cross-examine that girl about a gentleman she never spoke to? So now, take what you got, and make much of it."

"I beg you will not quarrel," said Maria ;  
"the subject is one of such perfect indifference  
to us all, that it is not worth an angry word."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Brindsley," said  
the proprietress, who, as usual, took the wrong  
side of the allusion, "I beg your pardon ; the  
subject is one of deep and heartfelt interest to  
me. The violent and sudden death of that poor  
gentleman gave me a shock which I have not  
recovered since."

A knock at the hall-door called her away, or  
heaven only knows how or when the dispute  
might have ended.



## CHAPTER V.

## MYSTERY OF A LETTER—DIABOLICAL PLOT AGAINST MARIA.

OUR readers may perceive that Maria exhibited a spirit of independence and resistance upon this occasion, which she was unconscious, it was probable, of possessing. Miss Bennet made no further attacks upon her, face to face, as she had been in the habit of doing ; but from this day out she watched her closely, and hoarded up her malignity for some future opportunity of retaliation. She was not aware, however, that there were other eyes upon herself, and that, so far as Maria was concerned, every motion of her was watched with a degree of vigilance equal to her own.

It would be difficult indeed to describe the tumultuous state of feeling by which the bosom of our heroine was agitated upon that night. The image of young Clinton, which had almost been effaced, but never completely removed from

her imagination, and her heart, had once more been restored to new life and animation. The casual conversation, of which he had become the subject, and the fact that he was now residing in the same town with her—that she would have an opportunity of seeing him, and that, of course, she would most probably be seen by him, and her place of residence discovered, all perplexed and disturbed her; but whether with apprehension or pleasure, she felt it difficult even for herself to determine. She began to wonder, and to ask herself why he should have clung to her memory so tenaciously, and why the recollection of no other man did. At one moment she thought of him with delight, and at another with something like terror. She knew how easily the reputation of a girl, circumstanced as she then was, might be tarnished. She recollected the affectionate and solemn advice of her mother when parting from her, and her own faithful promise to abide by it. In fact, she remembered every thing that was necessary for her to think of; but notwithstanding this and all, she found that her active and treacherous imagination persisted in returning to the image

of the young and handsome lieutenant. At length she fell asleep, and, need we say, that he became the subject of her dreams.

At this period of her life, Maria Brindsley was ignorant of the force and firmness of her own character ; but from the spirit and energy with which she checked her rival, Miss Bennet, and the independence with which she replied to Miss Travers on behalf of Clinton himself ; but above all, from her firmness in refusing to hear the contents of the sealed paper which Stuart, the spaeman, had written, our readers may form a tolerably correct estimate of her resolution and self-restraint. And perhaps, one of the safest traits in her disposition, was an apprehension that she was deficient in moral strength, and felt the consequent necessity of being doubly vigilant of her own conduct, and the danger of allowing herself to get within the influence of temptation.

On awaking the next morning, her first sensation was one of pleasure and gratification. This feeling, had she had any experience or general acquaintance with life, ought to have alarmed her, and occasioned a good deal of dis-

trust in her own heart. The logic, however, of a beautiful young creature, entering her eighteenth year, is by no means a sound code of reasoning in matters connected with the tender passion. Notwithstanding all her theories and resolutions of self-preservation, she actually felt glad that Clinton was quartered in Armagh. True, she never intended, or hoped, or wished to speak to him, and on this account she thought it could be no harm to feel gratified that he was near her, and that she sometimes might have an opportunity of seeing him. This was a slight privilege which she thought a matter of mere indifference, inasmuch as the world could know nothing about it ; and thus we love, and thus we reason where we love. We shall soon see, however, in a short time, not only how she loved, and how she reasoned, but how she *acted*.

The next Sunday, as usual, she went to church, which was a point of duty she never omitted. She was not, it is true, insensible to the annoyance she had frequently experienced by a number of young men, most of whom were respectable, who stared at her, and made several attempts to speak to her, but, thanks to her

modesty and prudence, without success. She was known now to be only a dressmaker, and as too many of this class occasionally forget the decorum which should attach to the respectability of their employment, she was, in consequence, obliged to undergo the same reckless license which the levity of others had entailed upon the whole class. Notwithstanding all this, she frequented her weekly devotions with the strictest regularity, and repelled every unbecoming advance to conversation with quiet and maidenly dignity. On the Sunday in question she took her place in one of the pews on the left hand side as you go down the aisle, in company with Miss Travers and honest Betty M'Clean. She had not been long seated there when a portion of the ——th regiment entered the church, and the officer in charge of them, after looking first to the right, and then to the left, happened to espy her. He refused to follow the sextoness, who was about to conduct him to another pew, and immediately entered that in which Maria was seated. To say that he watched and stared at her during the service is, we presume, unnecessary. In no instance, however, or by no

manœuvre—and he tried several—could he succeed in catching her eye, or in exciting her attention by any possible effort. When service was over he waited until the congregation had all gone out of church, when he beckoned the sextoness to him, and inquired the name of the young lady who sat in the pew with him.

“Why, there were several, sir, who sat in the pew with you.”

“I am aware of that, my good woman, but you must be d—d stupid not to know that the girl I mean is the beautiful creature who sat right opposite myself.”

“Oh, sir, I know—she is a dressmaker, and lives with Miss Travers in —— street.”

“Is Miss Travers a dressmaker?”

“She is, sir; it was she who sat beside the girl you speak of, who lives with Miss Travers.”

“And what street is this, you say, Miss Travers lives in?”

“In ——street, sir. As for that beautiful creature, sir, she’s the talk of the whole town.”

“The talk of the whole town! What the deuce do you mean by that?”

“Why, simply in consequence of her extraordinary beauty.”

“Nothing more? Any scandal about her, eh?”

“No, sir; but instead o’ that she has the reputation of being the modestest and best-conducted girl in Armagh.”

“Oh, indeed! very creditable to her. I am glad to hear it. I was quite edified by the very nice manner in which she got through her devotions. I am a religious person myself, and like that sort o’ thing. Yes, she did her devotions nicely indeed, and much to my satisfaction. There’s a shilling for you, and say when you see her, that I was very much struck by her piety, and her d—d fine face and figure. Say the person she made such an extraordinary impression on is Captain Doolittle of the ——th. Or, stay! this is better—here, give her this card, and say I shall feel very happy in making her acquaintance.”

The poor simple sextoness scarcely understood any thing further than that the gentleman was very much impressed by her devotional manner, and of course resolved to give her the card upon the very first opportunity.

That evening, after mess, Doolittle asked a few of his brother officers to his private room, among the rest Clinton, whom he specially invited for a purpose with which the reader will soon become acquainted. Of course they had supper, and some card-playing ; and after supper, Doolittle addressed Clinton as follows :

“ Clinton, I have heard you boast of a celebrated beauty, with whom you were acquainted in your native place, I believe ?”

“ I beg your pardon, Doolittle,” replied Clinton, “ I did not say I was acquainted with her.”

“ Well, no matter, you saw her. Now, I will lay you fifty guineas that I produce a prettier girl.”

“ Done !” returned Clinton at once, “ I take it, Doolittle ; but what do you mean by beauty ? Is it the face only ?”

“ Face and figure,” replied the other.

“ That is precisely what I wish, Doolittle. Well, I take you—it is now a wager, gentlemen, and no mistake about it.”

“ None, certainly,” replied their companions —“ the matter is clear and beyond cavil. Who is she, Doolittle ?”



"I don't know her name," replied the captain, "but if you will all come to church on next Sunday, I will show her to you."

"Who is, or who are, to decide the wager?" asked a Captain Benson.

"Egad!" said Doolittle, "I have no hesitation in leaving the matter to himself. I know that Clinton is an honourable fellow, and will determine fairly."

"Never mind, Doolittle," replied Clinton, "I will not be outdone in generosity—I shall leave the decision of it to your own honour."

"All d—d nonsense," observed Benson, "leave it to Cairns, M'Gregor, and myself. Don't you know that each of you will back his own filly against all odds?"

"I don't like the expression, Benson," observed Clinton; "the girl I lay the wager on is as virtuous and well-conducted as she is beautiful."

"And mine," said Doolittle, "is as pious as a Puritan. I saw her at church to-day—sat in the same pew right opposite to her—but if a single glance would secure my salvation, she would not give it."

"But how is the wager to be decided?" asked Cairns; "we must have an opportunity of seeing each of the parties before we can settle it."

"On next Sunday let us attend our religious duties, like good Christians," replied Doolittle, "and I promise to show you *my* party."

"And if you will all dine at my father's on Saturday week, and take beds there, I will show you *my* party, at our parish church."

This was as much as could be accomplished under the circumstances, and it was so arranged.

Maria's daily habits were beautiful and regular, as they always are in the virtuous and pure of heart. Nothing, indeed, could surpass her anxiety to improve herself in everything that she deemed necessary for her future welfare in life. She was possessed with an insatiable thirst for reading, to which she devoted a great portion of every Sunday. In fact it was astonishing how rapidly she improved in everything on which she bestowed her attentions. She wrote both a good hand and a good style, and was capable of keeping Miss Travers's accounts in a clear and satisfactory manner. Her language, too, gradually improved in purity and force, and

might not disgrace the lips of many women who had received a good education. Every spare hour was set aside for the acquisition of something which she felt it an advantage to know or to possess ; and in this way she went on, day after day, adding one improvement to another, until she became, in general information, as well as in the knowledge of her particular business, actually without a rival in the establishment.

It was about two o'clock on the Tuesday after Doolittle had seen her in church, that a female came to the residence of Miss Travers, and having asked if a young woman named Brindsley lived there, was answered in the affirmative by Becky, the servant. Miss Bennet was passing into the parlour at the time, and saw the woman standing outside with a letter in her hand.

"It's a letter, Miss," said she to Miss Bennet, "for Miss Brindsley."

"You had better bring Miss Brindsley down herself," said that lady ; "perhaps she may wish to see the messenger."

"Haith and you're right, Miss ; maybe she would, sure enough."

Becky then went upstairs to bring Maria down, when Miss Bennet, availing herself of the opportunity, asked the messenger if she knew from whom the letter came.

"From a gentleman," replied the woman.

"Oh!" she replied, "I'm not surprised at that, for Miss Brindsley has a good many gentlemen acquaintances; but who is he in particular?"

"Why, Captain Doofittle, of the ——th."

"Oh! I know; but he's no favourite with her, so if you wish her to read it, make off the moment you give it to her. Had it been from Lieutenant Clinton it would be well received—and you may say so."

She then withdrew into the parlour, and Maria almost immediately made her appearance in the hall.

"Here's a letter for you, Miss," said the woman, having added the "*Miss*" in consequence of Maria's beauty and elegance of deportment. Maria took the letter, looked at the address, and turned to the woman to inquire from whom it came. The latter was then proceeding out of the entrance gate, but turned round and said, "It's from Captain Doolittle, Miss—he's in love

“wi’ you,” and immediately disappeared. Maria was about to fling the letter after her, and would have done so at once, but from an apprehension that Miss Bennet, whom she saw in the parlour, might take it up, and probably make some use of it to her disadvantage. She accordingly brought it upstairs to her own sleeping room, when, after having looked once more at the superscription, she got pen and ink, and wrote upon it the words, “*Unopened, and rejected with indignation and scorn.*”

At this moment she was summoned by Miss Travers to make out an account for one of her customers, and hastily placing the letter on the chimney-piece, she left the room. The moment she went, Betty M’Clean came out of a small closet which was boarded off the room, and in which she herself always slept, and being struck with something like curiosity at the indignant expression of offence which flashed over Maria’s countenance on reading the superscription, she stepped out and looked over the back of the letter. On reading the words which Maria had written on it, she said : “Haith, there’s something queer in this letter, if one could only know

it. Why the de'il didn't she open it, any way ? Sure there could be no harm in that ; but maybe she wull, after all."

A light foot was now heard coming up the stairs, and in order to cover herself from all suspicion of having even looked at or examined the appearance of it, she retired to the closet, which communicated with the room by a door, the upper half of which was glass, and behind which hung a piece of coarse green gauze, with a long slit or rent in the middle of it. She naturally expected that Maria would have returned, but to her surprise, the person who entered the room was Miss Bennet, as she could perceive through the rent. This lady looked around the room with a great deal of caution, then approached the chimney-piece, seized the letter, looked at it for a moment, hastily broke it open, and read it from beginning to end. A smile of baleful triumph then settled upon her face, and after putting her very white and beautiful hand to her forehead, as if to reflect upon the circumstance, she hurriedly thrust the letter into her bosom, and stole out of the room on tiptoe. Betty marked all this closely, and as the secret-

ing of this communication was a dishonest and treacherous act, she resolved to allow the consequences of it to proceed, until some crisis requiring her testimony might arrive, if any such crisis ever *should* arrive, as she thought was not improbable.

Maria, between one thing and another, had been engaged with Miss Travers for upwards of an hour, when, having returned to her own room, in order to determine whether she should burn the letter or return it to the writer with the strong expression of her indignation and scorn stamped upon it, she discovered, to her astonishment, that it had been either accidentally removed or stolen. Now, we must say for Maria, that she was not naturally suspicious, because no candid and artless individual, whether man or woman, ever is. It is only those who have been corrupted by the worst experience of life who are so, and who measure the motives and actions of others by their own. Still it was impossible that the letter could have gone without hands ; but who could have been the thief, or what the object could have been in purloining an unopened letter, was the question. She determined,

however, to make inquiry, and if possible to recover it, in order that she might cast it into the flames before their eyes, having first stated to them the individual from whom the messenger said it had come. With this object in view, she returned to the work-room, and inquired if any of them had seen or removed a letter which had been directed to her, and which she had placed on her chimney-piece only about an hour and a half ago.

"I am confident," said she, "of having left it there with my own hands, and now it is not to be found—it has been removed ; but if any of you have taken it away as a practical joke, I will forgive you, provided you restore it to me, in order that I may act upon the occasion as I ought."

The poor girls stared at her with astonishment, and none of them with a more complete assumption of that feeling than Miss Bennet.

"When did you receive the letter, Miss Brindsley?" inquired that lady.

"About two hours ago. I left it on the chimney-piece, having been called away by Miss Travers, and it is gone."



"This is discreditable to the establishment," said Miss Travers, "the letter must be found. You are sure you left it on the chimney-piece, Miss Brindsley?"

"As sure as I am of my life," she replied; "some one in the house has taken it. There can be no doubt of that."

"Well," said Betty M'Clean, "de'il a doubt there can be of that. Let us be all searched, and here am I willing to begin with it."

"Be it so," replied Miss Bennet, "although it is not a generous proposal, Betty, yet it is a fair one. I am also willing to be searched, although I never thought it would come to that with me."

"No!" replied the generous Maria, "I will have no search. I would not insult my friendly companions by such a course. The letter, I have reason to think, is one not at all worth any notice. It can be of no use to any body, and of no injury to me. All I can say is, that I have never opened it; and what is more, that I did not intend to do so."

"If I thought there was any person in my establishment," said Miss Travers, "capable of

being guilty of such an act, they should remain but a very short time in it. I know what it is myself to receive letters, and I know what I must have felt if any of those letters had happened to be purloined or opened ; why it might have killed me, and I only wonder Miss Brindsley bears it with so much patience."

"Miss Brindsley and I have not, I regret to say, been upon such terms as we ought to have," observed Miss Bennet, in a tone of feeling that indicated a very generous spirit ; "but I must admit that her conduct under the loss of this letter, and her unwillingness to have any person searched in consequence, considering how much the letter, if known, might affect her, is highly creditable to her."

"You are quite mistaken," replied Maria, "if you think the letter could injure me in the slightest degree, unless, indeed, it fell into the hands of an enemy, nor, probably, even then ; but as I know nothing, nor care anything about its contents, I beg we may drop the subject altogether. I don't think it is worth all the talk we have had about it."

Betty M'Cleane sat as mute as a milestone,

looking from one to another as if she knew not which was the thief, but when her eye rested on Miss Bennet, there was a very slight touch of something like amazement in it, mingled up with what might be termed a strong feeling of admiration. In the mean time, the honest girl kept her thoughts to herself, and made a firm and resolute determination to look closely into the coming events, so far, at least, as they might be connected with Maria. She knew in her soul, that the abstraction of the letter, as well as, probably, the letter itself, would be used for the basest and most malignant purposes against the innocent girl ; but as she had the clue to Miss Bennet's conduct, and as she understood her motives in the business, she resolved to countermine her in every one of her manœuvres.

On the Saturday following, after a good deal of well-digested planning, Miss Bennet contrived to write the subjoined epistle to Captain Doolittle, in a close and successful imitation of Maria's hand, which she had frequently seen in accounts made up by the latter for Miss Travers :—

"SIR,—I ought to feel ashamed while answering your too flattering and polite letter, but the truth is, that I feel tired of the wretched set that I am forced, by most romantic circumstances, to mingle with. I do not exactly know how to act ; I am divided between two opinions. I know that Lieutenant Clinton has a sheep's eye after me, but *only* a sheep's eye. He is not the man for my *money*. I like a gentleman of liberal principles ; and if I could be taken out of this miserable situation, in which romantic circumstances have placed me, I would be true and faithful to any gentleman of honour who would enable me to leave it, without any future risk of poverty or neglect. I think I have a spirit above the mean life that I am obliged to stoop to. I have conducted the business of a most respectable house in Dublin for three years, and have had an opportunity of mixing in very polite society in the way of my profession, and could conduct myself in a very lady-like fashion. Do not blame me for going so regularly to church, for in a small town like this, one must keep up a proper reputation. I can't have an opportunity of meeting you until

to-morrow, when I shall be on the N—y-road, about a mile out of town, as near seven o'clock in the evening as possible. We shall then talk over matters in such a way as, I trust, may be agreeable to both parties. I write this note always under the impression that you are a gentleman of honour and *liberality*.

“Yours *affectionately*,

“MARIA BRINDSLEY.

“P.S.—When you meet me, it might be as well if you kept your card in the palm of your hand and turned it towards me, lest we might make a mistake.  
“M. B.”

This precious document the vindictive and unprincipled wretch sealed up, and contrived to put into the post-office, but not without observation. Disguised in a hooded-cloak, Betty M'Clean—her evil genius—watched her motions and traced her, at a distance, to the post-office, at the hour of half-past eleven o'clock, A.M. —a little before which time she affected to be taken ill, and pleaded the necessity of going to the apothecary's to get a bottle of salts for her

nerves. When she retired from the post-office Betty went over to the window, and having tapped at it, said to the postmistress : " Am afraid, ma'am, that a put in the wrong letter awhile ago. Will you look at it, if you please. and tell me who its directed to ?"

" How can I tell which letter you put in," replied the postmistress.

" It's the last in," said Betty, " and am thinking, you'll be apt to find it on the tap of the rest."

" The uppermost," answered the other ; " this must be it, I suppose. ' To Captain Doolittle, Armagh Barracks. ' "

" Thank you, ma'am," returned Betty, " that's it, and aalls right. I can neither read nor write, and I wasn't sure that a didn't put in the wrong letter."

She arrived home somewhat sooner than Miss Bennet, who, in order to conceal her part in this most unprincipled intrigue, made it a point to go to the apothecary's, where she procured a few drops of smelling salts, as an apology for her journey out.

In the meantime, Sunday—a day connected

with our narrative in a double sense—arrived, and Maria, as usual prepared to go to church, accompanied once more by Miss Travers and Betty M'Clean, with whom, indeed, she generally went. They were in the habit of sitting always in the particular pew we have mentioned, and on this occasion they occupied it once more. The congregation were only beginning to assemble, and in order that they might secure a seat in the same pew, three officers, dressed in full uniform, made their appearance, and took their places right opposite them. Maria was neither disturbed nor discomposed, but sat with downcast eyes, apparently engaged in thought. In a few minutes Doolittle made his appearance, and joined them ; still, calm, and without the slightest indication of emotion, or any consciousness of the coming assignation. We do not say that she did not give each as they came in that natural glance of indifference which we bestow upon strangers, but that was the only notice she took of them. At length Clinton came to the pew, entered, and took his seat beside his friends. Never was there so marked, so legible, and so rapid a change, as his appear-

ance occasioned in her countenance. A blush, instant and tumultuous, swept over her whole face, and as much of the neck as was visible. Nay more, her hands, as they held her prayer-book, visibly trembled, and her emotion was not only obvious to all, but it was perfectly distinct and clear to every one in the pew that he (Clinton) was the cause of her agitation. Even the very heavings of her bosom were apparent, nor could any effort on her part enable her to suppress them. After some time this tumult, whether of pleasure or pain, it is hard to say, perhaps it was of both ; but, be this as it may, it ceased, and was not renewed until after the conclusion of the service, when the officers rose to depart. Then, a single glance, quick as thought, and again the whole countenance was overspread with blushes. On her way home, she took Miss Travers's arm, who perceived that she trembled violently. In fact, she was unable to sustain her part in the conversation, as was evident from the fact of her often giving wrong answers when she did speak, and sometimes she was absent and silent, and returned no answers at all. Both Miss Travers and



Betty drew their own conclusions from what they witnessed, and in such a way as unquestionably to connect Maria's agitation with some mysterious influence which Clinton must have had the power of exercising over her.

When our military friends left church, Clinton addressed them as follows :

"Gentlemen," said he, "I apprehend that this wager must be drawn. Pray, Doolittle, is the youngest of those three respectable-looking females, the person on whom you have made the bet?"

"Certainly, Clinton ; and I will not withdraw it."

"Oh, but you must, my dear fellow, when you learn that she is the very individual on whom *I also* laid my wager. We have both, without knowing it, wagered upon the same person. It seems she is now in Armagh, a fact of which I was not aware until this day."

"In that case," replied Doolittle, "the wager is off ; but I care not for that. Where are you going, Clinton?"

"Faith, I will follow her home, until I see where she lives," he replied.

"Save yourself the trouble, my dear fellow ; she's engaged."

"Engaged ! What do you mean ? To whom is she engaged ?"

"To a spruce, rather handsome youth—some-what the worse of the wear though—by name •Jeremy Doolittle."

"Impossible," replied the other. I will not, and I do not, believe it."

"Well, perhaps you are right ; but, in the meantime, will you lay another wager, to the same amount, that she is not ?"

"What, another fifty ? be it so ; but, in addition to that, I would lay my life that you are mistaken."

"Well, but is it a wager ?"

"It is. I said so ; but I now leave you. Yonder she goes, and I must keep her in view, without seeming to follow her."

"Will you be at home in an hour ?" asked Doolittle."

"Yes in half an hour. Why do you ask ?"

"Because I have a document to show, from under her fair hand, which will rayther astonish you. Bye-bye !"

Doolittle, who was—as too many of his class are—an abandoned profligate, and who boasted of his successes as if they had been feats of honourable enterprise, could not conceal his triumph on the receipt of this diabolical epistle. Having taken a pen and obliterated the words containing the line and place of assignation, he\* went to Clinton's room, and in a voice of elated swagger, whilst he capered and danced about, addressed him as follows :

“ Clinton, you owe me fifty pounds, which you may as well pay. Clinton, you're a goose—Clinton, you're a sheep, and will get well shorn some of those days ; Clinton, you're late in the field—Clinton, you're a day after the fair. I have secured her—*eureka*, my boy, *eureka*—I have found the prize ; she's mine.”

“ What the deuce are you at, Dooly ? What maggot has bitten you now ? Are you crazed ? Only you don't drink in the morning, I should say you were at the brandy-bottle. What do you mean ? And why do you flourish that letter about in such a fashion ?”

“ Wait, my good fellow—wait, I say, till you see it, and then you will fork out without hesitation.”

"Where's the use of all this strutting and cackling about it," replied Clinton. "You may swagger as you like, but, by ——, I know I *can't* lose."

"It is not that, my boy—it is not that, I say, but this"—and he placed Miss Bennet's assignation in his hand as he spoke—"read, read, and propound."

Clinton took the flagitious document, and deliberately read it through ; but when he came to Maria Brindsley, at the bottom, his face became deadly pale ; for, poor fellow, humble as Maria was, she had been his first love. To describe what he felt, would be difficult, if not impossible. He started to his feet, with the open letter in his hand, and began to walk backwards and forwards through the room.

"Clinton, my dear fellow, don't faint," said his friend, with sarcastic triumph ; "you are ill ; it is a severe blow, I grant ; shall I ring for a glass of water ?"

"Dooly, be quiet, sir," replied Clinton, sternly ; "let me think for a little. I am more interested in this than you can imagine. I am surprised—astonished. Good heavens ! Are we to

discard the very evidences of truth and modesty which the hand of nature, nay, of God himself, has impressed upon the countenances of some of his creatures."

"Yes, go on ; try metaphysics, they may relieve you," said Dooly, as they called him in barracks. "If, however, you take my advice, you will get a Bible, and become a good Christian ; it's a clear case, that you will require strong spiritual support under this severe dispensation. The Bible then ; or what do you think of the bottle. Come, I see it must be either the Bible or the bottle ; but, if I were in your case, I know which *I* should prefer."

Clinton still walked to and fro, in a silence that indicated some tumultuous struggle within him. He looked from time to time at Doolittle—looked fiercely too—as if about to speak ; again paced up and down, but spoke not for a considerable time.

"Dooly," said he, at length, "this affair must go no further."

"Must it not ? and why so Clinton ? Have you any particular interest in this girl ?"

"A deep interest."

"Why so? Are you and she acquainted? Have you any prior claim? Let us, at least, understand each other; but remember, that whatever may be your explanation—perhaps it may be romantic, she talks about romance, faith!—remember, I say, that as the matter stands now, or may stand in future, *no surrender's* my motto. I nail it to the mast. I ask again, are you acquainted with this girl?"

"No; I never spoke to her."

"Then, what the devil do you mean, Clinton, by all this fudge? You don't know her, and you never spoke to her; then, what interest can you have in her, unless it be to secure her for yourself?"

"I tell you, I have a deep interest in her; an interest which I can neither explain nor account for. I cannot stand by and see so beautiful and modest a girl deliberately ruined."

"Modest! did you read her letter? Egad, my boy, that's the production of a knowing one. See how ably she goes about making her bargain; but, to tell you the truth, I am myself devilishly surprised how a creature so young and innocent-looking, should have got a knowledge of such

diplomacy. Did you see how she blushed at the consciousness of my presence, to-day ?”

“ I will not believe it,” replied Clinton ; “ I cannot believe it. The thing is impossible.”

“ What is her name ?”

“ Brindsley—Maria Brindsley, certainly.”

“ Well, and is it not there in black and white ?”

“ I will read the letter again,” replied Clinton ; “ but, in the mean time, I am utterly confounded.”

He then reperused the letter, until he came to the following words : “ *I have conducted the business of a most respectable house in Dublin for three years.*” “ Ha !” he exclaimed. “ Great heavens ! I am right ; the writer of this cannot be Maria Brindsley ; she is not more than a few months from her mother’s house, from which she never had been absent until her removal here.”

“ There is no difficulty in that, Clinton. Do you think that she who could write such a letter, would scruple at a pardonable fib to give herself *prestige* ? Why, you are sillier than I ever thought you were, and have, as she hinted,

a good deal of the sheep in you. I dare say she never saw Dublin in her life, and that the thing *is* a fib ; but even so, I pardon it, and rather give her credit for her fancy than otherwise."

"Dooly," said his friend, "this letter never proceeded *directly* from herself ; it must have been the consequence of evil communication, the result of some vile contamination, that has corrupted her principles, or that will do so, if she is not saved in time. I entreat you, then, to give up this base and ungenerous pursuit."

"Base ! I beg you to understand, Clinton, that I will not have the term *base* applied to me. You will please to retract it."

"To ruin the only child of an humble but pious and respectable widow ; to leave her heart desolate, and to drive the poisoned shaft of affliction, sharpened by disgrace and infamy, into her heart ; to do this wilfully and deliberately, in order to gratify a foul and licentious passion, *is* base, and I will *not* retract it unless you retract your intention of destroying this ill-advised and unhappy girl."

"Do you mean to fight for this girl ?"



"No, not in the present stage of the question. Do you?"

"No, not in the present stage of the question; but, I must confess, it is rather queer to hear Satan rebuking sin."

"I have had my failings like other men, Doolittle, but to carry destruction and shame under the roof of a virtuous family, is what I have never done nor contemplated, and what, I trust, I never shall do. All I can say is, that this letter appears to me to be a mystery. I cannot comprehend it. I cannot reconcile it to the conduct of a girl who bore a most amiable, pure, and unspotted character in her native place. Such a girl could never precipitate herself at once, I may say, into the gulf of vice and infamy, as the writer of this letter proposes to do."

"It's quite evident, Clinton, that she requires but little temptation to do so," replied his brother officer.

"Well, Dooly, for the present I suspend my judgment, and I entreat, nay, I implore you, to suspend your purpose, or rather, to abandon it altogether. Believe me, you will feel the better of it on your death-bed."

"Now, I really never poke my nose into your affairs, Clinton, and I beg that you will not interfere in mine. When you wish to break a lance as a gallant knight, let the lady of your love at least be worthy of it. And now about the bet."

"I regret I made any such bet, Dooly ; but as it is made, I shall see it out with more certainty. I deny that you have won it. Good heavens ! if that girl were only what I supposed her to be, I would fling five times the amount of it to you, or to the dogs. Leave me, Dooly. I must go out again. I have business to attend to."

Dooly left him ; and on his way to his own room, exclaimed, or rather thought :

"This fellow is in love with her, I can see that, and only wishes to get me out of his way, that's his dodge, but I shall disappoint him. What devilish fine lectures on moral virtue he can read me. I wonder would he practise them himself. Still, I am considerably astonished at this affair. On Sunday last at church I cursed her in my heart for not looking at me ; and to-day again I could not get a glance, but that

was shame on her part. Then there appeared to be such sincerity, and an earnestness in her devotions. Pshaw! hypocrisy; and that is easily assumed; but where could she have gotten it so early? Why, born with her—for such is the fact in too many instances, when vice does not proceed from either experience or example, but from instinct—and what, after all, does it come to? If I don't, another will."

## CHAPTER VI.

CLINTON MAKES INQUIRIES ABOUT MARIA—MARIA MAKES DISCOVERIES NOT ONLY IN HER OWN HEART, BUT, AS SHE THINKS, IN CLINTON'S.

SUCH was the logic with which the profligate wound up his reflections.

Clinton sat down at his table, and began to think ; but why was it that he began to think, especially when he found that the subject of his thoughts was the humble girl, Maria Brindsley ? This was the very question he put to himself.

“Why,” he asked himself, “does the knowledge of that letter sweep over my heart with such a hurricane of passion ? What is it, or what ought it to be to me, what becomes of her ? why should I love her ? I can never make her my wife ; and suppose I were placed as Doolittle is, how would I act ? But still, those lightning glances at church ; so modest and blushing, yet so unconsciously significant. Yes,

by heavens ! that girl *does* love me, or there is no truth in woman, in the light of God's sun, or in the heart of any human being. This day seems to be the day of her doom ; but am I a man, or can I suffer it ? Shall I not make an effort to save her from perdition ? If she falls, let me have, at least, the consolation of knowing that I left nothing undone to rescue her from the gulf into which I see she is about to precipitate herself. I shall, this very hour, call upon her, and ask to see her ; if she refuses me, it is then quite clear that she is hopeless, and that I should blot her out of my memory, and I fear I may add, out of my heart, for ever. Alas ! why did I ever see her, and why does it appear that her fate and my happiness should be linked together."

When Miss Travers, Betty M'Clean, and Maria, reached home, the latter, as usual, repaired to her own room to read, but the others went into the parlour, where there chanced to be no person present, for the purpose of unbosoming themselves to each other, and discussing the cause of Maria's extraordinary emotion at church.

“ Well, Betty,” said Miss Travers, “ I think I can give a guess at Mrs. Clinton’s anxiety to get Maria out of her own neighbourhood.”

“ Whatever caused it, a’ll stand to it that it was no blame of Maria’s,” said her staunch friend ; “ de’il a bit ; she’s just as proper a girl as ever stepped ; so if you’re going to say any thing agane her, don’t let me hear it,” and she gathered herself for a conflict.

“ I am not going to say any thing against her, Betty ; it is no harm to fall in love ; and it is no harm to blush either. Indeed I remember when I used to blush myself ; I could feel it like a heat all over my face, and always did whenever *he* came to visit me—heigh-ho ! How full of sorrows and disappointments, calamities and sudden deaths, this unfortunate world is ! Poor dear man, to be snatched away—cut down like a flower—when I had every reason to know that he was about to make a proposal. It was only the evening before, that he borrowed his last loan of five guineas from me, and he said, with a smile and a wink, which there was no misunderstanding, that when he saw me again he would have another request to make, which

he hoped I would not refuse. Poor dear Thady, I never saw him, nor did he ever see me again."

There was a strong effort at the pathetic here, but it was a failure, and the pocket-handkerchief which she applied to her eyes came away unmoistened.

"No, it's not a crime to blush, and poor Maria to-day only felt as I always did when I met *him*. He promised that upon our marriage he would give up liquor."

"Well, but about Maria?"

"Why, don't you see it's a clear case that she's fond of Clinton? Don't you recollect how she blushed the other day when I only asked her if she knew him; and with what spirit she defended him? but above all things, did you see her in church to-day? Poor, unfortunate girl, of course she's fond of him."

"De'il a doubt of that," replied Betty, "and small blame to her, if she didn't let it get the better of her, which am sure she wont, for she has too much sense."

"Well, at all events, we must keep an eye upon her, and prevent her and him from meet-

ing. That Mrs. Clinton had some particular reason for sending her here, and that that reason was in some way connected with her and her son, all the water in the Atlantic wont wash out of me. Still, Betty, I neither say nor insinuate any thing against her. Mrs. Clinton is a woman of honour, but she is also a woman of prudence ; and I have no doubt but she acted right in separating them. If Miss Bennet had witnessed what we witnessed this day, there would be no end to it.

“ Oh, do you never mind Miss Bennet,” replied Betty, “ leave *her* to me. As it is, we could do without her. Maria could fill her place rightly.”

“ Indeed I have often thought of that, Betty ; she is quite equal to her in everything, and in some things superior ; for instance, as an accountant, and then I could expect a saving, for Maria would not expect such a liberal salary as I pay Miss Bennet.”

“ De'il a penny less than Miss Bennet gets ever you'll give her. If she's as well worth it as Miss Bennet—and she's better worth it—why shouldn't she get it ? Answer me that ?”



“ Well, well,” replied the proprietress, “ we can talk about it afterwards. If our suspicions are correct, there is little doubt but Clinton will be coming after her, and that you know would be discreditable to the house.”

“ Never mind, ma’am, a’d lay my life on her prudence.” And thus closed their dialogue.

Clinton felt himself in a state of perfect distraction. To think that such a creature as Maria was, or at least had been, should fall into the licentious grasp of such a vain and outspoken debauchee as Doolittle, drove him to fury—almost to despair. Was it some frightful dream? could such a thing be? Did he not witness her emotion on seeing himself unexpectedly that very day? Yes, and unless she was one of the most accomplished hypocrites that ever existed, he felt from her conduct in church that she loved him. Does hypocrisy blush, he asked himself, as she did? Was there no intelligence in the rapid glance or two which she bestowed him; but yet with such timidity and modesty, as if she felt it was wrong to look at him, and a crime to think of him; yes, precisely as if she knew the distance that separated them.

Could that artless, innocent, and most lovely face, be nothing more than a mask for wantonness and hypocrisy? Well, he would endeavour to unravel this mystery—for a mystery it most assuredly was.

In this state of mind he proceeded at a rapid pace to Miss Travers's house, and arrived there a few minutes after the close of the dialogue we have just reported. Becky opened the door when he knocked, and he immediately asked if there was a young woman living there named Brindsley.

"There's a Miss Brindsley here," replied Becky, speaking up for the credit of the establishment; "yes—Miss Brindsley—you are right."

"Would you be good enough to let Miss Brindsley know that a person from her neighbourhood would feel very much favoured by a few minutes' conversation with her. Here is my card; she will then know who I am. Say, she will oblige me very much, as the affair on which I wish to see her is one of the greatest importance to herself."

"Well, sir, a'll give yer message; but as

you're an officer from the barracks, a know she wont see you. Still a'll deliver yer message."

She was absent for about three or four minutes, when she came down with a corroboration of her own surmise, bearing back his card, which she returned to him.

"A knowed it, sir ; de'il a man's coat, either red, black, or blue, she has seen undher this roof since she came here. A think myself its a Papish nun she ought to be ; she sees nobody sir, and that's just the truth, and never goes out unless when Miss Travers and some o' the other girls go wi' her. Lord, a think the poor thing's afeard of her own shadow. She has returned you that bit o' paper, sir," she added, handing him back his card.

"She has refused to see me, then ? but what did she say ?"

"She said, sir, it would be very imprudent and improper for her to see you, and begged you wouldn't caall here again, as she had made up her mind *not* to see you. She says, it might be the means of injuring her carracter, and she hopes, as you are a gentleman, you wont caall a

second time, not being aware, she says, of any possible business you can have wi' her."

"Go and tell her again, that it is of the utmost importance to herself that I should see her—that I come as a sincere and honourable friend, anxious to save her from danger, and say that, if she regards her own welfare, she will and ought to see me."

"Lord," replied Becky, with a knowing look, "but you officers are quare men ; there's no puttin' you off ; well, a'll go up again."

She returned still with a more peremptory refusal.

"She says, sir, she will *not* see you, and that she knows of no business you can have wi' her, and that you ought to know it is wrong for a gentleman in your condition of life to attempt to caall upon an humble girl like her ; and she says, wanst for aall, that you need never come, for that she will never see you ; and feth she'll keep her word, for she's the very girl that can do that."

"She is lost," thought Clinton, "and the blushes which I this day attributed to another motive, were the blushes of shame and guilt.

Great heaven ! even so. I shall make another effort."

' Pray, who is the mistress of this establishment ?"

" Miss Travers, sir."

" Is she within ?"

" She is, sir."

" Would you give her Lieutenant Clinton's compliments ; she knows my mother, I think ; and say, I shall feel glad if she will favour me with a short interview."

Now, it is necessary to state here, that four female ears were expanded as far, at least, as mere volition could expand them, in drinking in every single syllable of the preceding dialogue, and that Miss Travers's heart—for she was an old maid, and consequently a scandal-hunter—beat with perfect delight when she heard Clinton's request for an interview with herself. She motioned to Betty to go up stairs, that they might be alone ; and the latter said, in a whisper,

" Well, but wont you tell me every thing—maybe I know more than you think."

Clinton was a gentleman in the best and

highest sense of that much-mistaken word. On entering the parlour, he treated Miss Travers with every mark of respect.

"Miss Travers, I presume?" said he, bowing.

"Yes, sir ; and I believe I have the honour of addressing Lieutenant Clinton."

"I am Lieutenant Clinton, madam."

"And your mother, Lieutenant Clinton, has been a kind friend and a liberal patroness to me, sir ; and, of course, I am bound to treat every person connected with her, and in whom she feels an interest, with every respect. Pray, be seated, sir."

Mr. Clinton sat down, and proceeded :—"I believe, Miss Travers, you have a very interesting young woman in your establishment, who happens to be from my neighbourhood."

"I have, sir, and I suppose you are aware that she is a *protegee* of your mother's."

"No, I was not aware of that fact ; but now that you have mentioned it to me, I feel it an additional justification on my part to hold some confidential conversation with you concerning this young woman."

"It is coming now," thought Miss Travers; "but my handsome young gentleman, don't imagine that you shall make me your agent in any design you may have upon her." In the mean time, she looked at him with a good deal of surprise, and waited until he should state the purport of his visit more distinctly.

"In the first place," said he, "and before I proceed any further in what I am about to say, I beg you to understand, that I am here in the character of a true and honourable friend to this young female; be assured of this, before we proceed another step."

"At the present stage of our conversation," sir," she replied, "I know not what to say to you. You must speak more plainly."

"It is right and proper that I should," said Clinton. "Will you allow me to ask, what has been the conduct of Maria Brindsley since she came under your roof? and whether you have yet had an opportunity of thoroughly understanding her character?"

"Oh now, sir," replied Miss Travers, "you can be understood. Well, then, I shall reply to you. In the first place, her conduct has been

without spot or stain—admirable in every point; she is an example of modesty, virtue, and industry, to my whole establishment.”

“Does she go out much? Is she often from under your eye?”

“No, sir, unless to church, or to walk with myself, she never goes out. Indeed I have often pressed her to take more exercise, and to go out oftener, but she prefers reading and improving herself at home, whenever she has a spare hour, which, indeed, is very rare, unless upon a Sunday.”

Clinton paused, and felt himself very much embarrassed by this account of Maria, delivered, as it was, with all the earnestness and confidence of truth.

“This, Miss Travers, is very strange,” said he; “you appear to feel the truth of what you assert respecting her, but might it not be possible that she could combine to deceive you?”

“No,” replied Miss Travers, “such a fact is *not* possible; but I really do not understand, although I am very much surprised at, the drift of your questions. What is their object, and upon what grounds do you make them?”



"You now place me, Miss Travers, in a position of great difficulty, as regards myself, and of great delicacy with respect to her. I may be mistaken, and I hope in God I am, and on that account—I mean for that reason—I—I—would not wish to utter a single sentiment calculated to weaken the confidence you place in her, and the respect you seem to entertain for her. Still I fear—"

"Pray, sir, what do you fear?" asked Miss Travers, with a slight breeze of *temper*. "So far as she is concerned, you have nothing to fear upon her account; but really, Lieutenant Clinton, I am very much surprised, indeed, at the warmth of the interest you seem to feel in the conduct of Miss Brindsley. Were you and she acquainted before, may I ask?"

"Never, madam, we never exchanged a syllable; but may I beg to know, if she has expressed a wish to go out *this* evening?"

"Not the slightest."

"Are you quite certain of that fact?"

"No, not quite certain," replied Miss Travers; "the thing *may* be possible, but I have heard nothing of it, and she never goes out alone. If

you remain here, however, for a few minutes, I shall soon be able to determine that matter."

"Before you go, Miss Travers, let me say, in order that you may the better understand the subject of your conversation with her, and such replies as she may make to you, that I have very strong reasons for apprehending that great danger may result to her reputation—great danger, Miss Travers, in its *worst* sense—should she go out this evening; and what I fear is, that she is a willing party to——"

"To nothing improper or wrong, sir," replied Miss Travers, with energy; "of that I am satisfied; but really, sir, this is all very mysterious. However, I shall now see her, and, in a few minutes, will let you know the result."

We need not detail the subject of Miss Travers's conversation with Maria, who stated candidly and truly, that not the slightest intention of going out that evening had ever entered her mind.


"No, sir," said Miss Travers, on her return to the parlour, "the poor girl has no notion of going out this evening. I found her in tears when I entered her room; and indeed, to tell

you the truth, sir, I fear that her heart is not exactly in her own keeping. I suspect as much; and I suspect, besides, that a certain handsome young officer—but I may be wrong—and God forbid that I should render her an injustice.”

“What handsome young officer?” asked Clinton, with an earnestness of manner which he could not conceal.

Women, in their management of love, or love affairs, are the originators of more mischief and unhappiness than could be totted up by Professor Babbage’s calculating machine. They will not go directly to the point in question, as they ought to do, but, on the contrary, are certain to give some unlucky twist to the business, which never fails to create mischief. Had the dress-maker at once stated to Clinton that he himself was the handsome young officer to whom she alluded, the matter would have been intelligible. But no, the devil should tempt her to make a female experiment, in order to corroborate her own suspicions respecting Maria and him. Instead, then, of stating the truth, she replied:

“Why, I think there is a Captain Doolittle in your barracks.”



The desperate old stager, however, was right as to the process, and the effect which it produced upon Clinton. A flush of indignation settled upon his countenance, both breath and speech left him, and he sat for nearly a minute incapable of uttering a syllable.

"Doolittle," he replied at length, "my brother officer ; but what about him ? And why do you ask this question in connexion with *her* ? I *must* be answered."

"It is all as I suspected," thought Miss Travers, having now gained her point. Clinton's agitation at this insinuation was such as could not for a moment be mistaken. His face became red with indignation ; his voice became hoarse and broken, and altogether his excitement, in spite of every effort on his part to repress it, could not be concealed. Miss Travers read it like the alphabet.

"But I cannot undertake to answer for her," she replied, "nor I will not. I may have my own reasons for not doing so ; but, in order that we may understand each other, which, up to this point, we certainly have not, may I request to know distinctly what the object of your present

visit is? why you express such an interest in this young woman? and why—but I declare I don't know, after all, why I should ask those questions—if Captain Doolittle seems to be a favourite, how is that any affair of yours?"

"Seems, madam!" replied the other, with a vehemence which he could not restrain, "seems! by heavens, it is more than seeming; I could easily satisfy you; but no, I will say nothing that could possibly injure or compromise. Oh no, no, we may be all mistaken. I shall leave you now, madam, but with one request before I go, which is, that you will not suffer this girl to go out during this evening. She is a most beautiful creature; she is from my native parish; she is under the protection of my mother, is she not? she is liable to great temptation in consequence of her extraordinary beauty, and—and—in fact, in truth, I wish to preserve her from danger, and I know that she is encompassed by it. I know—but you will promise me that she shall not go out to-night—you will promise that?"

"My dear Mr. Clinton," she replied, having now completely and thoroughly ascertained her

point, "the request you ask is easily granted ; she has no intention of going out, and, if she had, I would not permit her."

"Will you allow me to call upon you to-morrow ?"

"It is not a very prudent thing ; on the contrary, it is a very wrong one, to allow wild young gentlemen, like you, to visit my establishment. If I permit you, perhaps Captain Doo——"

"Don't permit him ; he will come here for no good purpose ; as for me, I come here to-morrow for an honourable one. May I come ?"

"You may ; but I must say, that it is upon the conditions that it shall be your last visit to this establishment. You know, Mr. Clinton, I must look to the character and reputation of my house."

"Well, madam, I thank you. I shall call to-morrow ; but I do not think that you may apprehend the trouble of any further visits from me, unless, indeed—that is—unless my mother should entrust me with some commands to you. In that case——"

“ In that case, Mr. Clinton, I shall be always happy to see you ; but will thank you to make, on such occasions, as few inquiries about Miss Brindsley as possible.”

She stretched out her forefinger, by way of warning, with a good-humoured but significant smile ; to which smile he could not at the moment respond, and with this last intimation that she rather understood him, he arose, and with much respect, and still more agitation, took his departure.

It would be an impossible task to describe the tumult of his mind on his way home. He was completely abstracted from external life. He saw nothing, he observed nobody—or if he looked angrily in the face of an individual, it was without any consciousness that he did so. His passions were actually in a state of tempest. He cursed Doolittle, whom he resolved to bring to an account, should he ascertain him to have injured Maria, either in reputation or person. He also cursed Miss Travers for having left him in such an equivocal and uncertain state of feeling with respect to her ; nor could he restrain his indignation against Maria her-

self, in consequence of her supposed attachment to his rival.

"I know I am a d—d fool," he said, "or I should give myself no concern about the paltry wench. Her letter to Doolittle stated nothing but the fact, and she is not worth a single thought—and yet—heavens ! this uncertainty is intolerable. I wish I could extract the absolute truth out of any one of them ; but unless I myself discover it by some ingenious effort, the thing will be impossible. Doolittle I know to be a liar and a braggart, where women are concerned, and that any assertion of his upon such a subject, could no more be depended on than a cobweb. As it is, I must only wait until to-morrow. By that time, I shall ascertain whether she has gone out this evening—that is to say, should Miss Travers tell me the truth, which is a fact very much to be doubted. However, we shall see, or at least try and see."

We have said that when Miss Travers came down stairs after her interview with Maria, she found her in tears. This was true, and it would require a much more profound analyst of the female heart than we are, either to describe or



disentangle the conflicting principles from which her emotions, on that occasion, proceeded. That in her simplicity of heart she had endeavoured to impose upon herself by a belief that the sentiments which she felt for Clinton were not love, is a fact which involves a delusion, into which many a young creature like herself has fallen. Now, however, after having seen him unexpectedly in the church, the reality stood out clear and distinct before her, and could no longer admit of question. There was, however, a still stronger element of—what shall we say?—pleasure or distrust? in her young and inexperienced spirit. No, but of both combined. She felt it as an impression which she could not shake off—and which, by the way, she did not attempt to shake off—that humble as she was, and unworthy of his affection, Clinton loved her. She measured the investigation of that fact by her own emotions in church, and, above all, by the few glances that passed between them. From this proceeded her distress. Was that love honourable? Such a supposition was not to be entertained. Even granting that it was, the idea of yielding to it was not for a moment

to be thought of. She could never be his wife without inflicting disgrace and dishonour upon him among his equals, and of this she never could suffer herself to become the instrument. Then, if his love was not honourable, as how was it possible to be so for a girl in her condition of life? With what, then, could she console herself for the love which she bore him? View it as she might, it involved either infamy on herself, or disgrace on him; and to neither of those distressing alternatives could she think for a moment of lending herself.

All those sensations and reflections, however, were precipitated on discovering that he had called upon her, and sent up his card. She took the card in her white and trembling hands, looked on it for a moment, and then returned it, with the messages by the servant which we have already detailed. Until this minute she had been thinking much and deeply, but shed not a tear. Now, however, that she knew he was in the house, under the same roof with her, and felt that the visit was made on her account, she could no longer restrain her feelings. Notwithstanding the strength of the conflict which

was going on within her heart, she experienced a sense of rapturous pleasure, which fairly overcame her ; her head swam, her bosom panted, and she would probably have fainted had she not been relieved by tears. She wept bitterly, and in this tumultuous state of feeling it was that Miss Travers found her.

One little anecdote we must mention here. When she deemed it near the time of his departure, she stole out to the lobby, with the hope of hearing his voice before he went. She had never yet heard it, and on this occasion she did not—a circumstance which filled her with disappointment, and caused her heart to sink in sadness and regret.

He was no sooner gone, than Betty M'Clean made her appearance in the parlour, with her female principle of curiosity set to the sharpest possible edge.

"Well, ma'am," said she, "remember you promised to tell me everything. What did he say? Of course, all his talk was about her ; but you know yourself there can be no doubt of that—he's in love wi' her."

Now, we have said that Betty and Miss Tra-

vers had been in the habit of indulging in many a conflict from time to time, and that Betty had constituted herself the championess of Maria against all comers. This was a point of character which Miss Travers did not relish. She herself treated Maria with great kindness, and did not wish that any portion of the credit due to her for it should be carried off by another. Independently of this, she thought that there would be a want of dignity on her part, should she not be considered competent to aid and assist Maria in any possible difficulty without the intervention of a third person. There was, however, to confess the truth on behalf of this lovelorn and disappointed old maid, a considerable remnant still left of her former vanity, and when she reflected that Betty had been in the habit of amusing herself and her companions by indulging in tolerably strong ridicule against her affair with the unfortunate Thady M'Scent, she came to the resolution, not only of keeping her out of the secret for which she was so ripe and eager an auditor, but to give the visit in question a turn altogether different from what honest Betty expected, and which might, be-

sides, enable her to inspire her with that feeling of respect for herself, in which the blunt workwoman was so notoriously and sometimes so painfully, deficient. The devil of vanity, therefore, set to work in her old brain, and instead of disclosing the truthful purport of her dialogue with Clinton, she chose to substitute a fictitious one of her own. It is well for those who represent human life and character in books, that such principles exist in them, otherwise they should experience much difficulty in giving complicity to their plots, and, indeed, find the path of fiction a barren one.

“No, deil a doubt can be about it,” continued Betty; “he’s over head and ears in love wi’ her, and she wi’ him, or what would bring him here?”

“Betty,” said Miss Travers, assuming a very self-complacent air, “I have often observed that you are very deficient in a knowledge of life, especially as it is to be met among gentlemen, but above all, among military officers, and, indeed, officers of every description appointed under his majesty. Why should you imagine, for instance, that Lieutenant Clinton had no

other motive for calling here than a wish to see that young and very inexperienced girl, Maria Brindsley ?”

“ Why, it was her he called for ; and, am sure, that’s enough.”

“ You are sure ! no, you are not sure, nor you ought not to be sure of any such thing. You do not know the arts of men, Betty, especially when they happen to take a fancy to, or to be struck by, the stately and handsome appearance of certain females. I remember well, like yesterday, that when poor Thady came to visit me in Dublin, it was for another he inquired. I happened to hear the inquiry, and I went down stairs, and when he saw me he started.

“ ‘ I believe, sir,’ said I, ‘ there is a mistake here.’

“ ‘ On which side, my darling ?’ said he.

“ ‘ On yours, sir,’ I replied. ‘ I think you expected to see another lady.’

“ ‘ Devil a bit,’ said he, ‘ I expected to see nobody but yourself. And if I sent for her, it was only that she might give me every necessary information about you. You don’t know what I have suffered on your account,’ he con-

tinued, 'for the last fortnight. I searched all Dublin, up and down, north and south, right and left, for you, and, as I'm a gauger and a gentleman, it was my intention, if I hadn't found you, to have put you in the *Hue-and-Cry* ;' and so, Betty, that was the way our intimacy commenced."

"But what brought Mr. Clinton here, then, if he didn't come after her?"

"Betty, I will thank you not to press me with perplexing questions—questions that, perhaps, are too delicate for *me* to answer. All I can say is, that we had very little conversation about Maria Brindsley ; but I do not think it will be a proper thing in me to sit in that pew again."

"Why so?"

"I shouldn't wish to seem to give encouragement, Betty."

"Why, do you mane to tell me that it was on your own account he came?"

"I mean to tell you nothing, Betty, because I feel that, at this stage of the business, it might be imprudent ; but I know I am called upon to act a difficult part. Of course, I am but a

young woman still, Betty, I may say, in the ripest bloom of my life, and—ahem !”

“Faith,” replied Betty, “you’ve hit it there ; ripe enough you are, and hev’ been this many a long day—a nice winter apple on our hands. Lord ! Miss Travers, don’t make a fool of yourself ; or if you do, don’t think to make one o’ me. The truth is, you don’t wish to let me know the conversation that passed between you and him ; but if you won’t you won’t, that’s all ; keep your secret, and a’ll keep mine. You ! Lord, Lord, and such a girl as yon above stairs. Don’t be saft, a say, and, above all things, don’t imagine that in comin’ here he ever thought of you. If he told you so, take my word he’s only making a cat’s-paw of you, and a purty sharp one you can be when you like. So, then, you keep me out of the secret ?”

“Why, indeed, Betty, there’s no secret ; ahem ! that is, none I could disclose with any thing like delicacy ; none, certainly, so far as Maria is concerned, and that, for the present, is the only disclosure I can make, or the only one that would become me.”

“Very well,” replied Betty, “mind, a put you



on your guard against this Lieutenant Clinton. Take my word for it, in comin' here it isn't you he's after ; but keep your secret, maybe a'll open your eyes for you yet. A don't care who neglects Maria, but a'll have a guard over her."

Whether our foibles or errors are turned to account by Providence, it is difficult, if not impossible to determine, but on this occasion we may fairly conjecture that if Miss Travers had unbosomed herself to Betty, the latter would at once, we doubt not, have communicated the discoveries she had made with respect to the conduct and motives of Miss Bennet, and thus have saved poor Maria from much suffering and anguish of heart.

In the meantime, Miss Bennet, who was playing a double game, managed her cards so dexterously, that she contrived, as she thought, to slip out in the course of the evening without being noticed by any one in the house. Whether she was mistaken in this or otherwise, we are not now about to inform the reader. All we shall say on the subject is, that Betty, with motives equally secret, certainly disappeared immediately after her, and it was not until the

hour of tea arrived that the absence of either of them was noticed. It is not, however, our intention to trace either one or other of them at present. At a pretty late hour Miss Bennet returned, and in a short time afterwards Betty also made her appearance. As for poor Maria, she had been long in bed, but by no means disposed to sleep. The occurrences of that day had banished all rest from her pillow. She never felt her danger until now, when the great secret of her heart stood revealed before her ; but the conclusion she came to was—never to make a false step, never to place herself within the reach of temptation, and to practise, in its severest spirit, that great safeguard of female purity and honour, the principle of self-denial in all circumstances where moral danger lay before her.

## CHAPTER VII.

DOOLITTLE'S TRIUMPH—INTERVIEW BETWEEN CLINTON AND MARIA—JEALOUSY AND MISCONSTRUCTION.

THE next day, of course, was Monday. After breakfast Doolittle entered Clinton's room, with his usual boisterous and braggadocio manner.

"Well, Dooly," said Clinton, with unusual coolness and gravity, "you have been successful I presume?"

"I always am, my dear fellow ; never failed in a single instance during my short but brilliant career. Crown me with laurels, my boy. You understand me?"

"No, I do not ; who was the lady?"

"Say the happy fair, you villain. Why, confound it, you look like Socrates after he had taken his hemlock. Why the devil don't you pull up the lugubrious corners of your mouth, and congratulate me? *Veni, vidi, vici* ; but I suppose you don't know Latin, as very little of it goes far with us military

heroes. Hold up your head, man, I say, and offer your congratulations."

"I will when I know the name of the lady, not otherwise."

"Why, did you not see her letter?"

"You mean Miss Brindsley, as we say?"


"Did you not see her letter, I repeat? and in spite of all the vigilance that was brought to bear upon her motives, the fair hand that wrote that letter contrived to open the door unperceived, and hold, like a faithful girl, firm and true to her engagement. D—n it, don't look so blue upon it. I see the corners of your mouth down again. Don't feel mortified, my dear fellow; you know that in such a contest you have no chance with me. Gad, she gave them the slip."

"Doolittle, carry your triumph elsewhere. It is the boast of a profligate. I will thank you to withdraw. I have letters to write."

"Jealous, by all that's successful! But, upon my soul, I do not wonder at it. Faith, I even pity you, for I know it is a hard case to have that good-looking, handsome nose of yours thrust out of joint, with a hop, step, and jump. I say,

Clinton, where are your razors? by all that's desperate, I do not think it safe to leave them with you. D—n it, an inquest! That would never do for *you*, but would cover me with the glory of victory. Or what do you say of my double hint before?—the Bible or the bottle? Good-bye, good-bye!"

Now, as Clinton had never heard the name of the wretch who was, at this period of our narrative striving to involve poor Maria in all the infamy which was justly attributable to her own licentious and unprincipled conduct—as he could not even dream of her existence, or imagine that such a malignant being in the shape of woman was plotting the utter destruction of her character—what inference could he draw but that Maria had concealed her determination to go out on the preceding evening from Miss Travers, and succeed in privately escaping from them, to keep her engagement with Doolittle? He had now no doubt whatsoever of her guilt, but, nevertheless, he would give her a last chance, or, in other words, he would call according to his promise, and endeavour to ascertain whether she had gone out or not. If he could



satisfy himself that she remained at home, then Doolittle was a liar and a scoundrel, but if not, why he would propose a different course for himself with respect to her.

"But, perhaps," thought he, "this woman Travers is in Doolittle's interest, and will not tell me the truth. Doolittle is rich and extravagant, and may have bribed her. I am rich enough myself, and have more money than I know what to do with ; but in order to gain my purpose, I shall assail her vanity, compliment her on her beauty, and lead her to suppose that I am not indifferent to herself. The devil's in it if, through these means, I will not get out of her the information I want."

Now, it so happened, on the other hand, that Miss Travers began to think over the exceedingly pure specimen of fiction which she had delivered to Betty M'Clean, and felt a kind of vague, distant wish that it were true. She had never seen so handsome a young officer as Clinton was, nor so perfect a gentleman. She knew, or at least she imagined, that she herself was not without attractions, and she wanted no ghost to tell her that Clinton was a mere youth,

and that she might, by a little play and coquetry on her part, produce an impression on him. For one woman that reasons on matters of love, ten thousand never think of it. Miss Travers, now, only lived upon the recollection of her affair with Thady the gauger, which became tolerably threadbare from frequent repetition, and she had then reached that age when females in her condition of life are on a sharp look out either for a marriage, if possible, or a *liaison* of some kind, which may redeem them from having fallen, in the course of years, into the category of neglect. It was, on her part, the last expiring effort at female influence. With those feelings and reflections on both sides, and each equally prepared to play their parts, Clinton and Miss Travers met. The latter now felt that it was her object to keep alive the jealousy which she saw existed in Clinton against Doolittle, for that, she calculated, would withdraw his affections from Maria, and in this she reasoned with the accuracy peculiar to woman on such occasions.

When Clinton arrived, he was shown into the parlour, and informed that Miss Travers would see him in a few minutes. He amused himself

by looking about the room, and saw, hanging over the chimney-piece, two portraits cut out of black paper—one of which bore traces of Miss Travers herself, and the other, of some man of athletic dimensions, with strong Milesian features, strengthened considerably in their character by a very sensual mouth, and a decidedly saddle nose. There appeared to be an expression of broad Irish fun and comic irony on the gentleman's face, which could not be mistaken. Whilst he was contemplating these two portraits, the lady entered, with more than ordinary care and attention. On this occasion she had called up the utmost degree of serenity into her countenance, which, indeed, was beaming with smiles, and the moment she came into the room, she dropped him her best and most fascinating curtsey. Clinton replied by his most respectful bow, and immediately took the liberty of shaking hands with her, taking, at the same time, the additional liberty of giving hers a gentle squeeze ; but judge of his consternation, when he felt the pressure returned with interest. He knew, indeed, that the experiment he ventured upon was a fearful one, in case the good



lady should become vicious, and fasten upon him with all the desperate energy of an old maid. As his object, however, was to make her vanity subservient to his own purposes, he began, on second thoughts, to feel rather gratified than otherwise at the significant hint she had given him.

"Well, Mr. Clinton," said she, with a smile that had a world of meaning in it, "is your interest in Miss Brindsley as strong as ever?"

"Why, indeed, to tell you the truth, Miss Travers, I fear that I misrepresented myself yesterday upon that subject. This I mention as a kind of little secret between us."

"You flatter me, Mr. Clinton, by sharing any little secret with such an uninteresting person as I am."

"Uninteresting! I beg your pardon, you must leave that to be determined by others, that is, by the gentlemen, Miss Travers."

"Ah, sir, that is mere politeness; you would feel yourself bound, I fear, to pay the same compliment to any other woman; but, pray, what is the little secret you allude to?"

"Perhaps, after all," replied Clinton, "I

should not call it a secret ; it is only this, that the interest I said I felt in Miss Brindsley, was nothing more than a matter of strong curiosity on my part. As to the charge, however, which you make against me of paying the same compliment, as you improperly call it, to any *other* woman that I have paid to *you*, you do me injustice. I certainly do not feel the same interest, or rather, the same curiosity, in Miss Brindsley to-day that I did yesterday."

Here he ogled Miss Travers, and fabricated a gentle sigh ; whilst she, on the other hand, looked down with confusion, and made a desperate but unsuccessful effort at a blush. Suspecting, however, that the blush was an invisible one, she had nothing else for it than to sigh back to him, and cancel the obligation of the ogle by immediately returning it in kind.

"Egad !" thought Clinton, "this is beginning to grow serious ; but, unless I cajole her a little longer, I fear she will shut up, and frustrate my object after all."

"Miss Brindsley," he went on, "is certainly *rather* handsome, but she's not precisely of that style of beauty which I like. She would be, for

instance, much too young for my taste. I prefer waiting until all the personal charms are fully developed, which they never are until between thirty or thirty-five."

Now, we say that Clinton deserved to have been kicked out of the room, for wilfully and wantonly placing the unfortunate sempstress in such an awful fix. The pillory would have been paradise to it. It was, in fact, planting her in a cruel, but most ludicrous dilemma. For how, we ask, could she appropriate the application of the young man's taste to herself without admitting her age—an admission which, since the creation of woman, was never yet made by one of her class. Upon that subject, however, all old maids are invincible, as will immediately appear.

"Bless me, Mr. Clinton," she replied, "what a strange taste you have ! Thirty ! Thirty-five ! Monstrous ! especially in so handsome a young man as you are. Could you not confine yourself to twenty-five or twenty-six. Why, I fancy, I will be quite an old woman at thirty !"

"Well, but you know, Miss Travers, there's a long stretch between you and thirty yet ; but,

by the way, I have been looking at those two portraits," he added, rising up, and going to the chimney-piece. "One of them certainly is yours. They appear to be but a short time done. Who the devil, however, is this ogre who hangs opposite, and seems to be gibing you across the space between you? Upon my honour, I felt strongly inclined to take him down, and throw the ill-looking scoundrel into the fire. What right have beauty and deformity to be set thus face to face?"

"My dear sir," she replied, "I can explain all that. The female portrait is that of my dear mother, and the other is that of a half-brother of hers—a brave man, who fell in the service of his majesty."

"Oh, that explains it all ; your mother must have been a young woman when that profile was taken ; not more than forty I should think ?"

"Only thirty-six, I believe," replied the lady, with a wince that shot through her like a spasm of cholera.

Woe betide the man who, whether consciously or not, wounds the vanity of a woman. She may seem to pass it by, to overlook it, to

let it glide out of her memory, but so long as that vanity exists, which is only until her last gasp, she will not only never forgive him, but never rest until she has her revenge. Poor Clinton, for instance, was ignorant of the torture he was inflicting upon the unfortunate old maid—and she knew he was—but even that reflection could not save him. *He* had inflicted the *pain* on *her*, and it was now *her* business to inflict the *penalty* on *him*. Both, somehow, were travelling out of the record, and Clinton felt this; he was making little way, in fact, no progress at all in the object of his visit.

“Oh, by the bye, Miss Travers,” said he, with a peculiar smile at her, “you are putting everything else except yourself out of my head,—what the deuce is this I came here for? pray what was it, Miss Travers?”

“How can you expect me, Mr. Clinton, to be able to answer such a question?”

“Because the reason I ask is, that the absurd nonsense I uttered yesterday has completely left my head. I deserve it however; I had no business to come here under false colours.”

“It appeared to me, sir,” she replied—and

this was an experiment—"that we owe the honour of your visit to something concerning Miss Brindsley—something, if I guess rightly, in which she and Captain Doolittle are involved."

"Deuce take you, Miss Travers, I remember now; yes—oh no, Doolittle was not concerned in the matter at all,—yes, you promised to let me know if she should go out yesterday evening."

"Well, I really don't think she did, but I know I wish Captain Doolittle was anywhere but in this town, poor foolish girl!"

"But could she have gone out without your knowledge, Miss Travers?"

"Well I think not. It certainly was my intention to have kept my eye on her movements; but to tell you the truth, Mr. Clinton"—and here she glanced at him, then dropped her eyes and sighed—"to tell you the truth, I felt considerably disturbed yesterday evening; I wished to be alone; I felt somewhat uneasy, if not unhappy, and went to bed. Besides, I do not wish to become a spy upon my girls; they are all proper and well-conducted young women, and on that account I don't think I have any right to turn my establishment into a prison.—No,

I don't think she was out yesterday evening, although she might have been, as I was in bed."

"By the way, does Doolittle ever come here, Miss Travers?"

"No, sir. Mr. Doolittle, I understand, is a very—ahem, indeed they say he *is* cunning, but as for gaining admission here, there is only *one* individual belonging to your regiment who will have that privilege, I mean yourself Mr. Clinton; but pardon me, I know I am very wrong—very foolish, indeed, sometimes almost to weakness, when a person becomes a favourite, which is a very rare case with me; but if you will call to-morrow, I shall be able to let you know whether she was out yesterday evening or not."

"I do not think I shall be able to call to-morrow," he replied, "but if I do, or whenever I may call, it will not be on *her* account." This was said as if more was meant than met the ear. He then rose to depart, and once more took Miss Travers's hand in his.

"Mr. Clinton," said she, "one word with you before you go."

Heavens above, thought he, what is coming next?

They still held each other's hands, at least she was determined not to let him go until he should hear her. Oh ! woman, woman ! how seldom you reason or act except through your vanity or your passions.

"Mr. Clinton," said she, "I have heard much of this Captain Doolittle, and I would make it a personal favour"—here she gave a gentle squeeze—"that is, if my word or wish could have any influence with you"—here he returned the pressure—"not to imitate his example in a certain line of conduct. He has a terrible—an awful character among the ladies. Now, I am anxious that you should not follow his footsteps ; indeed, I wish not only for your sake, but for that of others, that he was anywhere but in this town,—poor girl, how I tremble for her !"

"You mean Miss Brindsley," said he, with an agitation which was on the very point of exploding.

"No," she replied, with a negative which was ten times worse than a direct admission, "no, no, I do not. Don't suppose or suspect such a thing; it is another young woman of the establishment I mean. I wish I had not said this; no, I would



not injure her by a harsh word; she is under your mother's patronage, and that is the reason why I am so anxious to prevent her from any thing like folly; for you know Mr. Clinton, she is very young and quite inexperienced. However, I shall have more particular intelligence for you in a day or two. When may we expect the pleasure of seeing you again?"

"Very soon I hope; but mark me, Miss Travers," he replied, with an energy that startled her, "when I do come, by heavens, it will not be on *her* account."

His eye gleamed, his fine face became flushed, and in the bitterness and vehement indignation of his heart, he unconsciously squeezed her hand until she was almost forced to cry out with pain. The heroism of woman, however, on such occasions, is astonishing. She not only did not cry out, but she gave him, with one hand spread over her face, which was bent, but delicately turned away, such a devil of a grasp in return, as brought him at once to his senses, and made him literally glad to get out of her clutches.

It is difficult—it is impossible to know the human heart, or even to dream of its action

under the various and unforeseen impulses which may agitate it. Murders have been committed under circumstances which never had been expected to occur, by persons of dispositions so mild, so gentle, and so humane, that their perpetration has coloured the whole preceding life of the individuals who committed them, with the black shadow of hypocrisy and concealed guilt. Nay, we question whether there is any man living who, if precipitated by a peculiar series of circumstances into a position beyond the power of human endurance, might not be tempted to commit a murder. "We know what we are," and that is *false* ; but "we know not what we may be," and that is *true*.

When Clinton returned to his barracks, he felt a kind of insane and desperate relief in the conviction that Maria was lost. Up until this day his passion for her—it was his first and only love—had been pure and honourable. He loved her ; he knew that, and he felt it. But he was not a profligate from principle nor from habit, nor had he made any of those licentious calculations with respect to her, which profligates and sensualists are in the habit of making. He had

never thought of projecting any villanous plan for her ruin. His love was a simple affection, without any portion of the grosser passions annexed to it, or contaminating it. He was a young man naturally honourable, and never calculated upon the consequences of his affection for her at all. He simply loved her with a most ardent and inexpressible force of pure but unreflecting passion. Had he been thirty years of age, and debauched by the usual experience and habits of military life, his passion, in consequence of her humble position in society, might have taken a different shape and a more flagitious character. And even this perhaps it might have done, were it not for the halo of virtue, innocence and purity which seemed to surround her in his imagination,—reflected, as he knew it had been, from the high respect and love which, young as she was, had encompassed her during her short and early life, and up until the present lamentable occasion. Now, however, she was changed, and so was the character of his passion. She was now soiled, degraded, lost,—she was no longer the object of respect—of pure and manly affection, she had been tried by

temptation, and had not stood the test. Still however, he could not give her up, nor would he. He should pursue her now from motives consistent with the character which she had shaped out for herself. He cared not what the consequences might be. There was a wild, a reckless, an indignant feeling in the experiment, and come what may, he would follow it up. She must have been a hypocrite from the beginning, for, according to all the marks and tokens of love, stealing gently and timidly from eyes that flashed into his heart, and blushes that fell on him like a charm—ay! according to all those, and the direct inferences that were to be drawn from them, he felt that the beautiful but lost girl had loved him.

His great object now was, if possible, to get into her society, and to achieve a triumph over Doolittle by rescuing her from him, and appropriating her to himself. This he considered as a master-stroke against that profligate, forgetting that his own profligacy in the act was as base as his, and that its accomplishment would sink the unfortunate girl into still deeper infamy. His love for her now was transformed into sensua-

lity, and something like revenge. She had dis-entitled herself to his respect ; she had stripped herself of all those virtues which in his ignorance of her real character he had attributed to her. She was now, he took it for granted, ready to become the property of the highest bidder, and on this account he was resolved to outbid every other competitor. But still the great difficulty lay before him. It was evident that Doolittle had prejudiced her against him—perhaps had extorted a promise from her that she should not see him. Even so, those reflections only stimulated him to greater exertion, and sharpened his ingenuity in finding out occasions to accomplish his object. This, however, was a matter of difficulty. He had already tried to see her and failed, nor could he flatter himself that success was at all probable, unless he could circumvent or entrap her by some able manœuvre yet to be projected and determined on.

A week now passed, and he could think of nothing else. Next Sunday arrived, and he repaired to church, as indeed did most of his brother officers, with the exception of Doolittle, who was absent—the fact being, that he had an

appointment with Miss Bennet, who was more her own mistress on that day than on any other, and who sanctified it accordingly. Clinton was keenly on the look out, and had resolved to watch the conduct both of Maria and Doolittle with the eye of a lynx. Judge of his astonishment when, after waiting until the service had commenced, he found to his surprise, and mortification, that neither of them were present. Without a moment's delay or hesitation he left the pew, and deliberately walked out of church. At that moment he disregarded all thought of decorum or disrespect to the ordinances of religion : had the primate himself been at the altar, he would have taken the same course. His cheek and brow were red with indignation, and his blood at boiling heat in his veins. Here was another appointment, gross, open, palpable; and he had now only one line of conduct to pursue. He would go directly to the house of Miss Travers, and ascertain whether she was within or not, and also whether there was any one with her. He accordingly did so, and in the course of a very short time found himself knocking at the dress-maker's door.

"Is Miss Brindsley within, can you tell me?"

"She is, sir."

"Is there any one with her?"

"No, sir, she hasn't been well the day; she wasn't able to go to church, poor thing, and indeed it's very seldom she keeps from it. She has been in very low spirits for the last week, and indeed to my thinking there's something on her mind."

"Now whisper," said he. "I have a message from my mother to her which I must deliver in person,—here now is a pound-note for you, I wish to go up stairs and deliver the message.—Pray what room is she in?"

The woman, our old friend Becky, looked with astonishment at the money, paused a moment—and yielded to the temptation.

"What room, sir? why, in the room over the parlour; it is our work-day room durin' the week, and our drawing-room on Sunday. Go up then, for if a tell her you're, here deil a stime o' ye she'll see."

"Oh, I understand," said he; "she won't see *me*—but she *shall* see me, at least until I deliver her my mother's message."

He immediately walked up stairs on tiptoe and found the door shut. Without a moment's hesitation he opened the door, entered the room, and found Maria reading a book. She started, and in an instant such a blush suffused her whole neck and face as rendered her beauty perfectly irresistible, and lovely beyond the power of language to express.

"Miss Brindsley," said he, "I have been rude, I feel, in obtruding myself on your presence without knocking ; but the truth is, I have been exceedingly anxious to see you, and to make your acquaintance ; but I feared if you had known I was here you would have refused me."

"I certainly would have refused, Mr. Clinton, if I had known you were in the house."

Her voice, as she spoke, was tremulous, and, altogether she was evidently in a state of excessive agitation, if not of positive terror.

"Don't be alarmed, my dear Miss Brindsley," he said. "My visit to you has nothing in it to excite any uneasiness on your part. I have been for a long time very anxious to have the privilege and pleasure of an interview with you,



and I have stolen a march on you for the purpose of effecting it ; but I trust you will forgive me. Indeed I am sure you would if you knew my motives."

"And pray, Mr. Clinton, what are your motives for intruding upon me in this disrespectful way?"

"Indeed, I have many, Miss Brindsley ; but I see I have interrupted your amusement," he added, taking up the book she had been reading, and which she had laid down open with the back up. "Some love story, I presume—of course."

"Yes, sir," she replied ; "and the truest that ever was written."

Clinton, on looking at the book, started, and gazed at her for a time. He saw that she felt confused, and blushed once more. Good heavens ! thought he, does her hypocrisy go so deep as this ?

"Oh, then, Miss Brindsley," he proceeded, "I have a double apology to make. I find, that instead of having disturbed your amusement, I have committed a worse offence, and disturbed your devotions."

He might well say so, for the book was the

Book of Common Prayer, open at the service for the day. He laid it down precisely as he had taken it up, and again looked at her keenly. Poor Maria felt that his eye was upon her, and whilst she actually trembled in his presence, feared to glance even at his countenance. She had, in fact, for the moment, become so utterly confused and disturbed by his presence, that she knew not exactly how to shape her thoughts into language. After a little time, however, she recovered her composure, and ceased to feel the alarm which had seized upon her at his unexpected entrance.

"Miss Brindsley," said he, "I know that I ought to apologise for this intrusion, but I really could not help it. I have felt and suffered much on your account—much more than you could imagine. Surely you cannot but know and feel that I love you. I say so simply and at once, and to tell you this with my own lips was the direct object of my visit."

"I must pay you a compliment, sir, at your own expense," she replied. "I respect you too much to suppose that you speak truth when you say so, Mr. Clinton."

"I *do* speak truth," said he ; "you may rest assured of that."

"Then it is a very painful and disagreeable truth to me, sir," she returned.

"And why should it be so?"

"There is every reason why it should be so. You cannot love for an honest purpose any woman out of your own rank of life."

"That is *my* consideration. If my affection could be returned, you would make me the happiest man in existence."

"I cannot listen to this conversation, Mr. Clinton, nor I will not. I am a very humble girl, it is true ; but I wish you to understand that I respect myself. Such language is an insult to me. I have always heard you spoken of as a gentleman, and I am surprised to hear it from your lips."

"Ah ! she is mounting her high horse now," thought he ; "she is playing her game ; but no matter, I shall see more of her before I go."

"You are too severe upon *me*, Miss Brindley," he replied, leaving a sharp emphasis upon *me*. "I rather think you know very well that it is *not* an unpardonable crime for an officer hold-

ing his majesty's commission to fall in love with you—or rather to pretend to fall in love with you.”

Maria raised her eyes and looked at him with amazement.

“I don't understand you, sir,” she replied—  
“and I should very much regret that any such person—any officer holding his majesty's commission, should fall in love with me. I grant you he might *pretend* to do so ; but whether in pretence or reality, it is a feeling which no proper girl in my station of life could countenance. I hope you understand me, Mr. Clinton.”

“I can't say as to that ; your sex is very difficult to be understood ; you take a fancy for one man, probably a profligate, who does not care a button about you, and, on the other hand, you reject a man who, it may be, loves you very sincerely, and will not even permit him to express that sincerity. I say,” he proceeded, with a warmth and energy which he could not repress, “that *you* cannot but know that I love you, and that I have loved you before ever you left your native parish. Can you forget the looks we exchanged in C——n church ?”

Poor Maria was truth itself, and now she felt, so to speak, the inconvenience of conscience, which secretly told her that what he said was true. Indeed, her crimsoned brow betrayed this, and she felt, for a short time, incapable of replying.

"No," he proceeded, "I see by your silence that you cannot deny it, and that you *do* remember it. Come, my dear girl, throw aside this foolish hypocrisy, and candidly admit the truth. I may not for some time have another opportunity of hearing it from your own lips."

"Of hearing what, sir?"

"Why, after all, that I am not indifferent to you."

"Such an expression, Mr. Clinton, you will never hear from *my* lips. If you have any expectation to the contrary, give it up; don't flatter yourself with it; I know my own humble situation in the world. All I have to guard is my good name, and may God forbid that I should sacrifice it for the gratification of you or any other man."

"Or any other man? Are you sure of that?"

"Quite certain, sir."

"Are you sure you have not already placed it in jeopardy with some other man?"

Maria now looked at him fearlessly.

"Yes, I am quite certain, sir, that I never have ; but why do you ask me such a question?"

"Come, come, Miss Brindsley, you know that yourself as well as I do. You know you are dissatisfied with your situation—tired," he proceeded, quoting from Miss Bennet's letter to Doolittle, "of the wretched set that you are forced, by most romantic circumstances, to mingle with. *I* am a gentleman of liberal principles, and am willing, besides, to save you from any future risk of poverty or neglect. Do you understand me now?"

She rose from her seat, and with flashing eyes, and cheeks suffused by indignation, replied :

"Yes, sir, I understand you now. So direct and open an insult can never be mistaken. I thought you had been a gentleman, Mr. Clinton, but I see my error, and regret it. Have I ever given you cause to use this language to me?"

How easy is it to weave our web of erroneous sophistry, when we see every thing in a wrong light, and argue from a false position, as was the case with Clinton.

"That shot has told," thought he, as he witnessed the deep indignation and scorn at that moment so legible in her countenance. "Doo-little was right; she now feels that she is discovered, but I shall develop her further."

"I grant you, Miss Brindsley, that *I* have no right to use either this or any other language to you. Indeed, I feel that I have no claim even to your respect, much less to——"

"No, sir," she replied, "after such language you have no claim whatsoever to my respect."

"Well, I think, notwithstanding, that you *once* did care something for me, but, unfortunately, I have been displaced in your good opinion."

"You have displaced yourself, sir."

"Some happier man has displaced me; is not that it?"

"And granting it should, what right have you to bring me to an account for my conduct," she replied, indignantly. "Except to have seen

each other, you and I are perfect strangers. This is our first interview, and, I trust in heaven it will be the last. I know not how you got in, but I do know that I gave orders to the servant never, under any circumstances, to admit you. A man of honour, Mr. Clinton, would have some regard for the reputation of an orphan girl like me, who has no other portion in this life but that, and the good conduct which entitles her to it. I trust, as you are a gentleman, you will think of this, and not attempt to intrude upon me again, especially when you know that I am resolved never to see you a second time, if I can avoid it."

She could not restrain her tears as she uttered those words, and she looked at him with something like rebuke and entreaty mingled. He saw her now in a new phase of beauty ; he took up the prayer-book once more, and again contemplated her for a long time without speaking. On this occasion, he experienced, as it were, the contest of two states of feeling within him—one pure and honourable, the other, sensual and profligate ; and so nearly were they balanced, that



he felt himself incapable of immediately renewing the conversation.

At length she spoke herself: "I am, as you know, a stranger here, Mr. Clinton, and as you were my neighbour, and ought to be a gentleman, I think I should expect protection from you, if I happened to be insulted by another, instead of being insulted by yourself."

"Ho ho!" thought he, "what does this mean? Is she coming round at last? "Protection!" he exclaimed. "My dear Miss Brindsley, only place yourself under *my* protection, and then let me see the man who will dare to insult you; but then you must give me the *right* to protect you."

The innocent girl did not understand the licentious slang of the mess-room, and simply replied—"There is no right necessary, nor is there the slightest danger that any insult may be offered to me which I cannot check myself. I was wrong to speak as I did. I require no defender, because the defence might be more dangerous to my good name than the insult."

"Perhaps," said he, looking keenly at her—"perhaps you are provided with a protector?"

"I trust I am, sir," she replied, "and one in whom I can confide, provided I seek no other."

"Oh, very well, Miss Brindsley," said he, completely misunderstanding her; "in that case I have no more to say on the subject. I had and have reason to suspect—indeed, to know—that *my* protection would be rejected. I will not offer it again, but shall take my leave. Only, before I go, let me acquaint you with one fact, which is this : You are the first girl I ever loved ; and, up until this moment, the only one. If you have suffered the arts or wiles of any man to tempt you from the right path, I beg and implore of you to retrace your steps. Your wonderful beauty is too often a dangerous if not a fatal gift. Excuse this visit—I know not what to say—I am confounded and distracted by the interest you have excited in me; or why should I not say by the love I feel for you, perhaps I should rather add, which I *did* feel for you. Truth is best—I do not now love you as I did, although I love you still—Excuse me—pardon me—I am much disturbed—and would to heaven I had never seen you—I would in that case have escaped much suffer-

ing. Think of my words, and I now wish you a good morning—I had thoughts about you—but they are gone! it is now too late.” And with these words he took his leave.

He was in fact deeply affected, and Maria saw that he had some difficulty in restraining his emotion. As he was going she looked at him with a feeling of compassion—let us call it so—but it was more—which she could not conceal. The heart of each was full, and truth to tell, it was the same spirit which shot from eye to eye between them, that animated their parting glances, and had created such a mutual impression in the church of C——r.

Proximity, where there is love, we know is at all times dangerous. Clinton, when he left her, found himself more strongly influenced by that passion than ever. He had been near her, he had viewed more closely the irresistible charms of her beauty and person. His heart, however, resembled a spring disturbed. It was neither clear, pure, nor transparent; it was vehement, but it was gross. He had seen her letter to Doolittle, and that only principle upon which love in its highest sense can live—con-

fidence—was lost. Then there was something like equivocation in her language, when he hinted that he had been replaced by another. Nay, there was that kind of indignation or violence, with which a woman turns against the individual who may insinuate that he has good reason to suspect her ; and he knew very well that the indignation in most cases of the kind is always high, in proportion to the truth of the suspicion. Still there lingered about his heart a hope that he had done her injustice. This, however, moved him but faintly—for was there not the damning letter in Doolittle's possession?

Our readers may feel surprised, that though labouring under a deep and deadly jealousy of Doolittle, he never once mentioned the name of that gentleman during his interview with her ; and this is the more strange, inasmuch as one of the objects of his visit was to tax her openly with what he conceived to be her improper intimacy with him. There was, however, a certain undefinable air—a certain spirit of purity, propriety and modesty about her, which made him feel that he could as soon have given

her a blow, as mention it in her presence. A thought, however, struck him. He felt that he had not given expression to half of what he ought to have said—that he had lost his presence of mind—that in fact the principal object of his interview was left unaccomplished. Besides, he was desperate, and bestowed very little reflection upon his future mode of proceeding with respect to her. He would leave nothing undone—unattempted—to get her into his power—to supplant Doolittle—and to punish him for the open boast which he had made of his conquest. But hold, was it a conquest? He knew Doolittle to have often boasted of triumphs that had never taken place. It might be so here. The letter might be a spurious one, and its contents a fabrication. He would, if possible, ascertain that fact; he would write to her; he remembered her handwriting well—if it were hers—she might answer him or she might not, he did not much care, at least he thought so. There seemed something difficult in the matter, and that might give him a clue to it. He *must* come at the truth, and at it he should come, no matter who might suffer

or wince under it. He immediately went to his writing-desk, and in a state of mind which was not far removed from lunacy, he prepared to write, but found, on making the attempt, that he should relinquish that object for the present. He accordingly closed his desk, and resolved to wait for a cooler and more considerate opportunity.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

